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Wrestling and Wrestlers:

Biographical Sketches of Celebrated Athletes of the Northern Ring;

TO WHICH IS ADDED

Notes on Bull and Badger Baiting.

BY

JACOB ROBINSON

AND

SIDNEY GILPIN.

Of all the athletic amusements of the people, Wrestling is beyond doubt the best.—CHRISTOPHER NORTH.

LONDON: BEMROSE & SONS.
CARLISLE: THE WORDSWORTH PRESS,
75 SCOTCH STREET.

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TO THE MEMORY

OF

JACOB ROBINSON,

THESE PAGES ARE

GRATEFULLY DEDICATED,

BY

HIS FELLOW-WORKER,

SIDNEY GILPIN.

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PREFACE.

EVERY dale and valley, every nook and corner, throughout Cumberland, Westmorland, and North Lancashire, at all likely to yield materials, has been ransacked and laid under subservience in the compilation of this volume; and it now becomes the pleasant duty to record the fact, that not a single instance of unwillingness was met with, on the part of the multitude of narrators, who supplied the items of the various events chronicled.

The local newspaper files have materially aided our labours, in a variety of ways. Besides supplying many passing incidents, we have found them, in some instances, exceedingly useful in the way of verifying and correcting dates.

A brief description of Swiss Wrestling was promised, for the introductory chapter, by a native of that country resident in London. This promise yielded no fruit at the time, and it is a matter of regret that it still remains unfulfilled.

Of Wrestling in France, we have not been able to glean much information, although enquiries were set on foot through the columns of *Notes and Queries* and *Bell's Life in London.*

For much information contained in the article

on Wrestling in Scotland, we are indebted to Mr. Walter Scott of Innerleithen; and for a few other items we have to thank Mr. Robert Murray of Hawick.

While the feats of many well known wrestlers are to be found in these pages, the names of others equally well known are necessarily omitted; but we may be able to publish a record of their achievements at some future time.

With a full consciousness of many imperfections, we now leave our work to the judgment of those impartial readers, who may honour it with a perusal.

LOCAL WORKS ON THE SUBJECT.

Wrestliana: an Historical Account of Ancient and Modern Wrestling. By William Litt. Whitehaven: R. Gibson, 1823.

Second Edition of the above, (reprinted from the "Whitehaven News,") by Michael and William Alsop, 1860.

Wrestliana: a Chronicle of the Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestlings in London, since the year 1824. By Walter Armstrong. London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1870.

Famous Athletic Contests, Ancient and Modern, compiled by Members of the Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling Society. (Reprinted from the Best Authorities.) London: F. A. Hancock, 1871.

Great Book of Wrestling Refcrences, giving about 2000 *different Prizes, from* 1838 *to the present day.* By Isaac Gate, Twenty-five Years Public Wrestling Judge. Carlisle: Steel Brothers, 1874.

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INTRODUCTION.

ANCIENT GRECIAN WRESTLING.

THE ancient Grecians were passionately fond of festivals and games. In every particular State such institutions were occasionally celebrated for the amusement of the people; but these were far less interesting than the four public games frequented by multitudes from all the districts of Greece. The Pythian Games were celebrated at Delphi; the Isthmian at Corinth; the Nemæan at Nemæa in Argolis; and the Olympic at Olympia, near Elis. We propose to give a brief account of the Olympic games only, as being by far the most splendid, and in which victory was reputed to be the most honourable. The celebrity of these games was extended for many centuries after the extinction of Greek freedom, and their final abolition did not occur until after they had flourished for more than eleven hundred years.

The games were held in summer when the heat was excessive; and to add to the difficulty and fatigue experienced, the more violent exercises were performed in the afternoon, when even the

spectators were scarcely able to remain exposed to the sun. To prevent the competition of such as were unskilful, the candidates were required to swear that for ten months before the commencement of the games they had made it their constant study to prepare for the contest; and during the last thirty days they were obliged to reside at Elis, and had to practise daily under the inspection of the judges. Hence, the permission to contend at Olympia was regarded as no inconsiderable honour, and served in some degree as a consolation to the vanquished.

Immediately before the commencement of the different exercises, a herald led every candidate separately through the assembly, and demanded if any one knew him to be a man of profligate character, or to have been guilty of any notorious crime. As numbers were present from every state in Greece—to some of whom each of the combatants was known—it rarely happened that any suspicious character chose to expose himself to such a scrutiny. The candidates were required to make a solemn declaration that they would not endeavour to gain the victory by bribing their adversaries, or by a violation of the laws regulating the different contests; and any person guilty of a breach of this promise was not merely deprived of the olive crown,* but

* Daiklès, the Messenian, was the first who had the honour of being crowned with the simple wreath woven from the sacred olive-tree near Olympia, for his victory in the Stadium.

was fined by the judges, and could never after contend at the games. These regulations seem to have accomplished the purpose for which they were intended, since, during several hundred years, only five instances occurred in which any improper artifice was known to be employed by the competitors in the games.

The Greeks held the exercise of WRESTLING in high estimation, which, in point of antiquity, stood next to the foot race. The object of the wrestler was to throw his adversary to the ground; but it was not till this had been thrice repeated, that he obtained the victory. Like all who contended in the games, the Wrestlers were accustomed to rub their bodies with oil, partly to check the excessive perspiration occasioned by the heat and the violence of the exercises, and partly from an opinion that the oil gave the limbs a greater degree of pliancy and agility. As the smoothness occasioned by the oil would have prevented the combatants from grasping each other with firmness, it was customary for them, after being anointed, to roll themselves in the dust of the Stadium, or to be sprinkled with a fine sand kept for that purpose at Olympia. If in falling, one of the Wrestlers dragged his adversary along with him, the combat was continued on the ground, till one of the parties had forced the other to yield the victory.

The inhabitants of Hindostan, and of the countries constituting the ancient kingdom of Assyria,

have undergone a variety of revolutions; but inactivity has always formed the leading feature in their character. In every age they have fallen an easy prey to invaders; nor have the repeated instances of oppression to which they have been exposed, ever roused them to limit the exorbitant power of their sovereigns. The Greeks, living in a climate nearly as sultry as that of Asia, would probably have fallen victims to the same indolence, had not their early legislators perceived this danger, and employed the most judicious efforts to avert it. Among the means devised to accomplish this end, none seem to have been so effectual as the public games. It was not by any occasional effort that a victory could be gained at Olympia. Success could be obtained only by those who were inured to hardship; who had been accustomed to practise the athletic exercises while exposed to the scorching heat of the sun, and who had abstained from every pleasure which had a tendency to debilitate the constitution and lessen the power of exertion.*

WRESTLING IN JAPAN.

In Japan wrestling appears to be an institution of greater importance than even in our own country. The meetings for its exhibition before the public are made quite important affairs. They are mapped out and arranged annually by the ruling authorities.

* Hill's Essays.

A distinct race selected from the native population are brought up and trained in the practice from their youth. This tribe profess to trace back their wrestlings long before the Greeks held their Olympic games on the banks of the Alpheus. At the present day it is asserted that their Mikado or Emperor, near seven hundred years before Christ, encouraged wrestling; and during this long period—century after century—it has been one of the most popular amusements of this strange people. It might not have continued to flourish so long had not the government assisted in keeping the game alive by introducing it into and regulating the proceedings in all towns of any size. A large staff of professionals is kept solely for this purpose, and outsiders cannot enter and compete as is done in this country.

The Japanese, from all we can glean, do not appear a race likely to be devoted to athletics. Lighter amusements—more suitable to their climate, requiring less violent bodily exertion—it may be inferred, would be more to their taste or inclination. Their mode of wrestling, however, has this advantage, that it does not necessitate active preparation. Weight and bulk appear great, if not absolute, requisites in the wrestling ring. To accomplish these requirements, a fattening process is resorted to in lieu of hard work training. Ordinarily the male Japanese are not more than five feet five or six inches in height. It is a remarkable fact, however, that in the wrestling class there are many six

feet men weighing fourteen stones and upwards, some few eighteen or twenty stones. "I have never anywhere," says Lindau, "seen men so large and stout as these Japanese wrestlers. They are veritable giants."

A concise description of one of their wrestling meetings may not be altogether without interest. A special department of the government is entrusted with the duty of carrying out arrangements for holding a series of meetings in all the principal towns. A programme is annually issued, so that any town set down for visitation has sufficient time to make all needful preparations. A large plot of ground for forming the ring is selected, and enclosed with bamboos. Stages with seats are fitted up for the aristocracy and richer classes, and a small charge is made for admission. The ring is sure to be well filled, one half frequently being females gaily dressed for the occasion. The loud beating of a drum gives notice that proceedings are about to commence, and a dead silence reigns throughout the great crowd. An official comes forward and gives out, with a loud voice, the names of those about to contend; and announces, too, a list of places at which the fortunate ones have been successful. The drum again sounds, and all those appointed to wrestle enter and march round the ring, appearing as if duly impressed with the importance of the pending struggle. All are naked, with the exception of a gaudy silk girdle round the

loins. After parading round the enclosure, the combatants divide themselves into two equal sides, and squat down upon their heels. A stage is erected on four pillars in the middle of the ring, and raised about half a yard. The manager calls out the names of the first pair to contend, one from each side, and at the same time announces his opinion how the betting should run. These preliminary proceedings concluded, the two called on step out and are greeted with cheers from all sides. They sprinkle the ring with rice and water before the more serious work begins; rub rice between their hands, and drink salt and water. These curious proceedings take place in order, according to a prevalent superstitious notion, to bespeak the favour of the god who rules gladiatorial contests.

Four umpires, grave looking personages, are appointed, and stationed, pipe in mouth, at each pillar of the raised stage. A signal is given, and the two wrestlers uttering loud defiant shouts, and crowing like cocks, make a rush at each other, with all the fury and violence of two rival tups in the breeding season. The shock and noise of two such weighty bodies meeting resound all over the ring, and the spectators after a momentary holding of their breath, give expression to their pent-up feelings by ringing shouts of admiration. Blood, in almost all cases, is seen to flow from both competitors as they separate with the rebound, and slowly fall back. Again and again they meet, each endeavouring with

his utmost power, to drive his antagonist off the stage. After several rounds contested with the like violence and determination, they for a moment pause, and resort to a trial of a different sort.

They rush together and seize each other anywhere about the body or arms, incited and cheered on by the vociferous applause of the spectators. The fiercely contested struggle becomes intensely exciting, as the athletes close, and, locked together breast to breast and shoulder to shoulder, continue the conflict, each endeavouring to grasp the other round the waist. This is effected, after pushing and wriggling about for some time, by one or other of the wrestlers. After securing a firm grip, shaking his opponent, fixing his legs in position, and gathering himself up for a final superhuman effort, he lifts his now doomed foe high up in the air, and with what Cornishmen would call a "forward heave," hurls him clean off the stage, where he lies for some time enduring a fire of bantering, and then walks quietly off. Breathless, blood-stained, and perspiring from every pore, the victor looks proudly about and is greeted with cheers renewed over and over again. After parading round the ring, with uplifted outstretched arms, he makes a respectful acknowledgment, and walks off to his comrades.

The manager again comes pompously forward and summons another pair. Fresh animated betting goes on while they prepare for the onset; and it may be this fondness for gambling—common to

most eastern countries—which helps to keep up the popularity of wrestling. The second couple go to work precisely as the first; then another and another, till finally the champion of the day is proclaimed, and greeted with cheers that continue for some time. Generally he is presented with a decorated belt, and, with it fastened round the waist, goes about the observed of all observers.

And this, as detailed, is Japanese wrestling. We can hardly accord it the term as understood amongst us, and cannot deem it entitled to be classed with the honoured back-hold pastime of northern England, worthy of eulogy from the most fastidious-minded. Christopher North would not applaud a Yedo meeting with the hearty praise he gives to Cumberland and Westmorland wrestling on the banks of Windermere; neither would Charles Dickens have gone away from the Ferry so delighted, if the contests he witnessed had been such as the Japanese delight in. Indeed, our readers generally will, we imagine, be apt to consider the Eastern wrestling amusement no better than something akin to our mediæval barbarism. Certainly, nothing in athletics can be considered more strikingly different, than one of our quick scientific harmless bouts, as distinguished from the butting or tupping, the pushing and hauling, the rough tumbling about, and clumsy finale, in which victory is mainly due to overpowering strength and weight.

INDIAN WRESTLING.

THERE is a great similarity in the wrestling in India, and the same pastime in Japan. This similitude is so close, that after a description of the latter, there need not be much space devoted to a narrative of the sport in our great Eastern Empire. The public exhibition of the sport is, in a great measure, confined to the soldiers of the native regiments of infantry. Sometimes matches are made and come off which create wide-spread interest, by men who do not belong the service. So great is the interest taken in the contests, that they often continue for the best part of a day; and during the whole time couple after couple enter the ring, and continue to exhibit their skill. There can be no doubt, the encouragement of such pastimes will exercise a powerful influence in making them better soldiers, and more attached to the service.

The wrestlers are lithe active young fellows, and enter the ring in exuberant spirits. Before the actual commencement of the struggle at close quarters, each resorts to a ridiculous ceremony, in order to propitiate some powerful deity to whom they look for assistance to achieve success. The act consists in simply touching the forehead with a small portion of earth picked from the ground. On the conclusion of this preparatory proceeding, they return to the edge of the ring, and go through a series of manœuvres, which a stranger would look

at with astonishment, and which in reality can exercise no influence on the struggle. They jump about, first on one leg, then the other, bounding backwards and forwards repeatedly, with great agility. Loud bangs on the body follow, inflicted by the hands with such violence as to make a noise that resounds all over the ring. This is the opening play, followed by sham attacks, till an opportunity presents for close work. With surprising quickness, the arms are grasped high up towards the shoulders, and followed by violent butting of head against head, accompanied by twisting and wrenching. Meanwhile one of the two is thrown to the ground, where the struggle is continued amid excited cheering, till one of the tawny coloured competitors is forced on his back and securely held. This is seldom successful, until three or four bouts have been fought out, and a clear back fall gained.

The following account of a great wrestling match between the Mysore hero and the Punjaubee champion, was written by an Englishman in Madras :—

The Punjaubee champion is from North India. The Mysore man has lately won a great match, and was highly elated in consequence; while the Punjaubee had such confidence in his powers, that he pledged himself to give up the Sikh religion and turn Mahomedan if he lost the match. · · After waiting a few minutes the Punjaubee was the first to put in an appearance; he walked up amidst scrutinising glances and stood "within the ring." He was a great big fellow, beautifully built, and splendidly developed, with muscles standing out in knots on the arms and legs.

He was the same colour as most Punjaubees—light brown; taken on the whole, he was rather a handsome man. . . His opponent was not long in following him; he stood up, stripped, and stepped into the sand. He, too, was remarkably well built, but nearly black, and villainously ugly. He was not quite up to the Punjaubee. His muscles were large, and he looked the more wiry and active of the two; but the Punjaubee was the bigger and looked the stronger.

They began by standing two or three yards apart, in an inclined position, stooping towards each other, and advancing as stealthily as cats, suddenly making a snatch at each other's wrists and hands, and then drawing back with inconceivable rapidity.

The neck was the great object of attack, and many attempts were made by the native of Mysore to get hold of his antagonist's neck, while the Punjaubee made desperate efforts to clutch his adversary by the neck, and force his head down into chancery. After a good deal of dodging, and advances and retreats, clutches at neck, head, and wrists, the Punjaubee, who seemed the most eager of the two to finish the job at once, and had been acting more on the offensive than the defensive, suddenly made a rush in, tried to close and trip. Quick as he was, his antagonist was quicker, and the Punjaubee hero was foiled. Then time was called, and a short interval allowed for breathing.

Round, number two, began in right good earnest; each man seemed thoroughly buckled to his work, and in a few seconds the Punjaubee, who was in rare fettle, threw the Mysore man on to his knees; but the latter giving him a sudden and well directed push, nearly caused him to change his religion. Both men recovered themselves with marvellous dexterity, and grasping each other, they struggled up together, the Mysore champion getting upright a little the first; but almost immediately the Punjaubee gave his man a clean throw forwards, and the native of Mysore was discovered

lying full length on his chest, with the Punjaubee kneeling on his back.

From this time the contest resembled nothing so much as a "grovel" behind goals for a touch down. For a time the struggles of both men were intense, the Punjaubee having to do all he knew to keep his man down at all; and it seemed quite possible that, if the Mysore native could not get up himself, he would pull his opponent down, when the latter tried to roll him over. Presently came a pause, which the Punjaubee used to advantage, by covering his fallen foe with sand, so as to get the better grip. Skilful as the Mysore champion was, he could in no way retaliate when in this distressing position. However, he continually made clever attempts to regain his feet, and still cleverer ones to pull down the Punjaubee when he was endeavouring to turn him over. But finally the contest ended by the Mysore champion mistaking his chance to get to his feet, and after a grand struggle up to the very last moment, the muscular Punjaubee turned him flat over, so that there remained not the slightest doubt in the minds of all the spectators that both his shoulders were resting on the ground, the one throw was given, and the battle was won.

WRESTLING MATCH IN TURKEY.

THE following account of a modern Wrestling Match in Turkey, is so graphically related that we feel confident it will be perused with interest by most readers. We may remark by the way, that the gipsies who figure in the match are of the same race as their namesakes in England and other parts of Europe; but they preserve in Turkey more of their Oriental appearance and character. The writer is Lieut.-Colonel James Baker of the Auxiliary

Forces, who published a book on *Turkey-in-Europe*, in 1877.

I passed through a fine town called Barakli-Djumaa, in the middle of the plain [of Seres], and inhabited principally by Christian Bulgarians. A great wrestling match was going on just outside the town, and I stopped to witness the sport. A circle about thirty yards in diameter was formed by the men, women, and children,—Turks, Bulgarians, and a plentiful supply of gipsies—all sitting closely packed together round the circumference. There was the usual accompaniment of a gipsy band, composed of a drum and a clarionet, which was kept going continuously.

A competitor, stripped to the waist, steps into the ring and walks round with a grand air as he displays his muscular frame to the admiring gaze of the bystanders. Presently his antagonist enters the ring, and both competitors shake hands in a good natured way, and a little laughing and chaffing goes on. They then commence walking round, every now and then turning in to shake hands again, until suddenly one pounces upon the other to get the "catch," and the struggle commences. No kicking is allowed, and the throw must lay the vanquished man upon his back, so that both shoulder-blades touch the ground at the same time. The champion was a burly Bulgarian of herculean strength, when at the invitation of some black-eyed gipsy girls, a fine but slim young fellow of their tribe entered the lists against him ; but, although considering his youth he made a gallant struggle, a quick throw laid him sprawling on his back, to the evident chagrin and disappointment of the gipsy women. Their eyes flashed with anger as they now held a hurried consultation, when off started a very pretty girl evidently bound upon some errand. She soon returned with one of the most splendid specimens of humanity I ever saw. If, as is asserted, there were princes and dukes amongst the ancient tribe of gipsies who emigrated to Europe, this must certainly have been a descendant of one of them.

His fair escort pushed him into the ring with an air of pride and confidence, as much as to say, "Now, you shall see what a gipsy can do." The young man was about twenty-five years of age, and nearly six feet high, with a handsome, aristocratic, and cheery countenance; and as he took off his jacket and handed it to his fair one, and thus stood stripped to the waist, there was a buzz of admiration from the whole crowd. He was slightly made, but all was sinew. Laughingly, and half modestly, he shook his powerful antagonist by the hand, and then the walk round commenced, the young gipsy talking and laughing all the time. It seemed as though neither liked to be the first to begin; when suddenly the Bulgarian turned sharp upon his antagonist, and tried a favourite catch, but quick as lightning the lithe figure of the gipsy eluded the grasp, and a sigh of relief went up from his clan. The excitement was now intense, and the young girl perfectly quivered with nervous anxiety as she watched every movement of her swain. She would have made a splendid picture! They were still walking round, and it seemed as though the struggle would never begin, when, lo! a simultaneous cry went forth from the whole crowd, as the great Bulgarian lay sprawling, and half stunned, upon the ground.

The movements of the gipsy had been so quick, that it was impossible to say how the throw was done, but the Bulgarian was turned almost a somersault in the air, and came down with a heavy thud. The young champion shook him by the hand, lifted the heavy man high into the air, and then set him on his feet. The face of the young girl, as she handed back her hero his jacket, was pleasant to look upon. Lucky man! As she took him by the hand, and led him away to wherever he came from, I began to think there might be a worse fate than being a gipsy. . .

I was so attracted by the wrestling scene at Barakli-Djumaa, that I lost much time, and had to push on quickly, in order that we might reach a khan, perched up in a small village amongst the mountains which lay between us and Salonica.

OLD ENGLISH WRESTLING.

Our acquaintance or familiarity with Old English wrestling is, as may be surmised, circumscribed. We have therefore endeavoured, in part, to introduce the southern ring in the introductory chapter. In carrying out the attempt, considerable and important assistance has been derived from having the benefit of referring to a rare and curious work by Sir Thomas Parkyns, a distinguished wrestler and writer in the early part of the eighteenth century. According to Dr. Deering, in his *History of Nottingham*, a copy of Sir Thomas's work was forwarded to His Majesty George I., with a manuscript dedication. Sir Thomas further intimates: "I invite *all* Persons, however Dignifi'd or Distinguish'd, to read my Book." So say we,—for a more thorough-going and candid book we do not know; a book containing many curious home-thrusts and quaint sayings, bearing upon the art and mystery of wrestling. We can fully endorse the words of the Nottinghamshire baronet, when he says: "For my own part, I transcribe after no Man, having practical Experience for my Guide in this whole Art, and intirely rely on Observations made with the utmost Accuracy."

The art of wrestling in the present day is chiefly confined to the lower classes of the people. This is more especially the case in the south of Lancashire. In the north, yeomen's sons and farmers' sons are often exceedingly clever in the wrestling ring. The sport was, however, more highly esteemed by all classes of the ancients, and made considerable figure among the Olympic games. In the ages of chivalry, too, to wrestle well was accounted one of the accomplishments which a hero ought to possess.

The inhabitants of Cornwall and Devonshire, we are well assured, from time immemorial have been celebrated for their expertness in this pastime, and are universally said to be, in their style, the best wrestlers in the kingdom. To give a Cornish hug, used to be a proverbial expression. "The Cornish," says Fuller, "are masters of the art of wrestling, so that, if the Olympic games were now in fashion, they would come away with the victory. Their hug is a cunning close with their combatants, the fruit whereof is his fair fall or foil at the least." They learned the art at an early period of life, "for you shall hardly find," says Carew, in his Survey of Cornwall, 1602, "an assembly of boys in Devon and Cornwall, where the most untowardly amongst them, will not as readily give you a muster (or trial) of this exercise as you are prone to require it."

"In old times," says Stow (in his Survey of London), "wrestling was more used than has been of later years. In the month of August about the feast of St. Bartholomew,"

adds this very accurate historian, "there were divers days spent in wrestling. The Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Sheriffs being present in a large tent pitched for that purpose near Clerkenwell. · · But of late years the wrestling is only practised in the afternoon of St. Bartholomew's day." The ceremony is thus described by a foreign writer, who was an eye-witness of the performance. "When," says he, "the Mayor goes out of the precincts of the city, a sceptre, a sword, and a cap, are borne before him, and he is followed by the principal Aldermen in scarlet gowns with golden chains; and himself and they on horseback. Upon their arrival at the place appointed for that purpose, where a tent is pitched for their reception, the mob begins to wrestle before them two at a time."*

The following quaint and curious description of the row, and destruction of property after the wrestling, at the "Hospitall of Matilde"—so different from our peacably conducted northern rings—copied literally from *Stow's Annals of England*, will, we opine, be interesting to our readers.

In the year 1222—Henry the III. reign, on St. James daie,—the citizens of London kept games of defence and wrestling, neare unto the Hospitall of Matilde, where they gotte the masterie of the men of the Suburbes. The Bailiffe of Westminster devising to be revenged, proclaims a game to be at Westminster, upon Lammas day; whereunto the citizens of London repaired; when they had plaid a while the Bailie with the men of the Suberbesses, harnessed themselves and fell to fighting, that the citizens being foullie wounded, were forced to runne into the Citie, where they rang the common Bell, and assembled the Citizens in great numbers; and when the matter was declared everie man wished to revenge the fact. The maior of the citie,

* Strutt's Sports and Pastimes.

being a wise man and a quiet, willed them first to move the *Abbot of Westminster* of the matter, and if he woulde promise to see amends made, it was sufficient. But a certaine Citizen named Constantine Fitz Arnulph, willed that all Houses of the Abbot and Bayliffe should be pulled doune, which wordes being once spoken, the common people issued out of the Citie, without anie order, and fought a civill battaile, and pulled doune manie houses.

On March 31st, 1654, the Puritan parliament passed "An Ordinance Prohibiting Cock Matches" —(i.e., cock-fightings)—and likewise issued excommunications against well-nigh all classes of sports and pastimes; nevertheless, we find that Cromwell relaxed the strung bow by times, and indulged himself in witnessing some Hurling and Wrestling matches in Hyde Park, as the following quotation from the Commonwealth newspaper, *The Moderate Intelligencer*, amply testifies:—

Hyde-Park, May 1, [1654.] This day there was a hurling of a great ball, by fifty Cornish gentlemen on the one side, and fifty on the other: one party played in red caps and the other in white. There was present HIS HIGHNESS THE LORD PROTECTOR, many of his privy council, and divers eminent gentlemen, to whose view was presented great agility of body and most neat and exquisite *wrestling* at every meeting of one with the other, which was ordered with such dexterity, that it was to show more the strength, vigour, and nimbleness of their bodies, than to endanger their persons. The ball they played with was silver, and designed for the party that won the goal.

The same newspaper continues: This day was more observed by people's going a *maying* than for divers years past, and indeed much sin committed by wicked meetings with fiddlers, drunkenness, ribaldry, and the like: great

resort came to Hyde-Park, many hundred of rich coaches, and gallants in rich attire, but most shameful powdered-hair men, and painted and spotted women; some men played with a silver ball, and some took other recreation.

Later on John Evelyn's *Diary* furnishes us with a view of wrestling for fabulous sums. We think a hundred pounds, given at a meeting in the present day, a large and tempting amount. The following, however, taking into consideration the value of money upwards of two hundred years ago, does seem astounding: "1669—19 Feb.—I saw a comedy acted at Court. In the afternoon, I saw a wrestling match for £1000, in St. James Park, before His Majesty, a world of lords and other spectators; 'twixt the Western and Northern men; Mr. Secretary Morice and Lo. Gerard being the Judges. The Western Men won. Many great sums were betted."

After the foregoing brief notice of ancient wrestling, we shall proceed to crave the reader's attention to a similar pastime after the style practised in the counties of Devon and Cornwall. In doing so, we are fortunately enabled to gather important information from a rare and interesting old book, by Sir Thomas Parkyns, previously referred to, and first published in the year 1713. This work was held in such high estimation, that in 1727, a third edition had to be printed; and as the circulation would, in a great measure, be confined to the southern parts of the kingdom, such a rapid and

numerous sale must be taken to indicate extraordinary popularity. It will be gathered, the manner of wrestling differs materially from the scientific, manly, back-hold Cumbrian method. The space, however, devoted to the "Cornish Hugg," even in a work professedly devoted to northern sports, will it is confidently presumed prove acceptable, particularly to readers who admire the "Art of Wrestling," which the Nottinghamshire baronet designates as "most Useful and Diverting to Mankind," and "Diverting, Healthful Studies and Exercises." Such are the means by which he avers "You will restore Posterity, to the Vigour, Activity, and Health of their Ancestors; and the setting up of one Palæstra in every Town, will be the pulling down of treble its Number of *Apothecaries' Shops.*"

"Thus were our *Britons*, in the Days of Old,
By Sports made hardy, and by Action bold,
And were they, now, inur'd to exercise,
And all their Strugglings were for Virtue's Prize.
Man against *Man*, would not for Power contend,
No Lust of Wealth would *Hugg* a private End,
Nor *Each* would *Wrestle* to supplant his Friend."

W. T., on *Inn-Play, or the Cornish-Hugg.*

Not content with this glowing eulogium on a sport long dear to Cumberland and Westmorland, and as emphatic as any ever uttered on the Swifts at Carlisle, the enthusiastic baronet goes on to say:—

"No doubt but Wrestling, which does not only employ and exercise the Hands, Feet, and all other Parts of human

Frame, may well be stiled both an *Art* and *Science*; however, I will do my endeavour, both *Hip* and *Thigh*, that Wrestling shall be no more look'd upon by the Diligent as a Mystery."

Sir Thomas finds "Wrestling was one of the five Olympick Games, and that they oil'd their Bodies, not only to make their Joints more Supple and Plyable; but that their Antagonist might be less capable to take fast hold of them. . .

"I advise all my Scholars ne'er to Exercise upon a full Stomach, but to take light Liquids of easy Digestion, to support Nature, and maintain Strength only. Whilst at Westminster, I could not learn any Thing, from their Irregular and Rude Certamina, or Struggles; and when I went to Cambridge, I then, as a Spectator, only observ'd the vast Difference betwixt the Norfolk Out-Players and the Cornish-Huggers, and that the latter could throw the other when they pleas'd. . . The Use and Application of the Mathematicks here in Wrestling, I owe to Dr. Bathurst, my Tutor, and Sir Isaac Newton, Mathematick Professor, both of Trinity College in Cambridge."

He goes on to say: "I advise you to be no Smatterer, but a thorough-pac'd Wrestler, Perfect and Quick, in breaking and taking all Holds; otherwise whene'er you break a Hold, if you don't proceed sharply to give your Adversary a Fall, according to the several following Paragraphs, you're not better than one engag'd at Sharps, who only parries his Adversary, but does not pursue him with a binding and home Thrust."

The following warnings are especially worthy a wrestler's attention: "Whoever would be a compleat Wrestler, must avoid being overtaken in Drink, which very much enervates, or being in a Passion at the sight of his Adversary, or having receiv'd a Fall, in such Cases he's bereav'd of his Senses, not being Master of himself, is less of his Art, but sheweth too much Play, or none at all, or rather pulleth, kicketh, and ventureth beyond all Reason and his Judgment, when himself.

Fœcundi calices quam non fecere Misellum.
That Man's a Fool that hopes for Good,
From flowing Bowls and fev'rish Blood."

He goes on to remark that sticking to these observations will enable a good wrestler to "stand Champion longer for the Country, as appears by my Friend Richard Allen of Hucknall, alias Green, (from his Grandfather, who educated him) who has wore the Bays, and frequently won most Prizes, besides other By-Matches, reign'd Champion of Nottinghamshire, and the Neighbouring Counties for twenty Years at least, and about 8 Months before this was Printed, he Wrestled for a small Prize, where at least twelve Couples were Competitors, and without much Fatigue won it. Whoever understands Wrestling, will ne'er call the Out-Play a safe and secure Play; besides the Inn-Play will sooner secure a Man's Person, when Playing at Sharps, than the Out, which ought to encourage Gentlemen to learn to wrestle."

In this learning to Wrestle our ingenious author—turned trainer—will "admit no Hereditary Gouts, or Scrofulous Tumours; yet I'll readily accept of Scorbutick Rheumatisms, because the Persons labouring under those Maladies are generally strong and able to undergo the Exercise of Wrestling. I am so curious in my Admission, I'll not hear of one Hipp'd and out of Joint, a Valetudinarian is my Aversion, for I affirm, Martial (Lib. vi. Ep. 54) is in the Right on't, *Non est vivere sed valere vita:* I receive no Limberhams, no Darling Sucking-Bottles, who must not rise at Midsummer, till eleven of the Clock, and that the Fire has air'd his Room and Cloaths of his Colliquative Sweats, rais'd by high Sauces, and Spicy forc'd Meats, where the Cook does the Office of the Stomach with the Emetick Tea-Table, set out with Bread and Butter for's Breakfast: I'll scarce admit a Sheep-Biter, none but Beef-Eaters will go down with me, who have Robust, Healthy and Sound Bodies. This may serve as a Sketch of that Person fit to make a Wrestler, by him who only desires a Place in your Friendship."

The baronet's beau ideal of a Wrestler's bodily formation is just such as we like to see in a northern ring. He "must be of a middle Size, Athletic, full-breasted and broad shoulder'd, for Wind and Strength; Brawny-Leg'd and Arm'd, yet clear-limb'd."

The following rules and regulations are—some of them especially—worthy the consideration of those who are managers in our northern rings, at the present time.

Rules and Conditions, which were to be observ'd and perform'd by all and every Gamester, who Wrestled for a Hat of twenty-two Shillings Price; a free Prize, which was given by Sir Thomas Parkyns of Bunny, Bart., for fifteen Years successively. The Gamesters which were allow'd to Wrestle for the aforesaid Prize, were to have it, if fairly won, according to the following Rules.

1. The two Gamesters that Wrestle together, shall be fairly chosen by Lot, or Scrutiny, according to the usual Practice.

2. The said two Gamesters shall Wrestle till one of them be thrown three Falls, and he that is first thrown three Falls shall go out, and not be allow'd to Wrestle again for this Prize: And it is hereby ordered and agreed, that he who first comes with two Joynts at once to the Ground, (as Joynts are commonly reckon'd in Wrestling) shall be reputed to be thrown a Fall.

3. No Gamester shall hire another to yield to him upon any condition whatsoever; and if any such Practice be discovered, neither of them shall be capable of the Prize.

4. But he that stands the longest and is not thrown out by any one, shall have the Prize, provided he does not forfeit his right, by breach of these Rules; if he do, the Gamester that stands the longest, and observes these Rules, shall have it.

5. If any Differences shall happen concerning the Wrestling, they shall be determined by two Men, which shall be chosen by the most Voices of the Gamesters, before they begin to Wrestle; and in case they can't decide such Differences, then they shall be referr'd solely to the Decision of the said Sir Thomas Parkyns as UMPIRE.

6. He that Wins the Prize and Sells it, shall be uncapable of Wrestling here any more.

7. That none shall have the Prize, that Wrestle with Shoes that have any sort of Nails of Iron or Brass in them.

8. He also that Winneth the Prize one Year, shall be Excluded from Wrestling for it the Year following, but the next year after that, viz. the third inclusive the first, he may put in and Wrestle for the Prize again; and ever after that, unless he shall Win a second Prize, and from that time ever after Excluded.

Sir Thomas Parkyns, Bart., of Bunny Park, Nottinghamshire, the author of the ingenious and singular work before us—from which we have quoted largely—upon the Cornish Hugg, or Inn-Play Wrestling, was a man who did not content himself with a mere theoretical knowledge of the art which he professed mathematically to teach. There was scarcely a sinewy and dangerous problem in his treatise, which he had not worked with his own limbs upon the Nottinghamshire peasantry of 1705—when he was young, lusty, and learned, and could throw a tenant, combat a paradox, quote Martial, or sign a mittimus, with any man of his own age or country. He was, it will be allowed, a skilful wrestler, a subtle disputant, and a fair scholar,

with certain eccentricities which he could afford to indulge in. He passed a very reputable life; doing all the good he could to the peasantry of his neighbourhood, both in body and mind; at once showing how to be strong and enabling them to be happy.

Sir Thomas Parkyns was born about the year 1678—whether at his paternal seat, Bunny Park, Nottinghamshire, or in London, we are unable to collect—probably in London, as we find him early at Westminster school, wrestling his way through the classics, under the celebrated Dr. Bushby. The epigrams of Martial appear, first, to have led him to turn serious thoughts towards wrestling—and he does not relish the poet the less for finding that he himself practised this healthy art after his daily prayer and family business.

From Westminster, Sir Thomas after a due course of little-to-do and Bushby, went to Trinity College, Cambridge, and studied mathematics as we gather afterwards for the chief purpose of making himself an accomplished scientific wrestler. At the then celebrated place of learning, "Students," he says, "even at the Universities, give the Exercise of Wrestling, and lie under a pecuniary Mulct for not appearing in the Summer evenings appointed for that Exercise."

Happy and long was the life which Sir Thomas led at Bunny Park. A "bold peasantry, its country's pride," by his advice and example grew up gallantly around him. He gave prizes of small value, but

large honour, to be wrestled for on sweet midsummer eves upon the green levels of Nottinghamshire, and he never felt so gratified with the scene as when he saw one of his manly tenantry and the evening sun go down together. He himself was no idle patron of these amusements—no delicate and timid superintendent of popular sports, as our modern wealthy men for the most part are; for he never objected to take the most sinewy man by the loins, and try a fall for the gold-laced hat he himself contributed. His servants were all upright, muscular, fine young fellows—civil but sinewy; respectful at the proper hours, but yet capable also at the proper hour of wrestling with Sir Thomas for the mastery; and never so happy or so well approved as when one of them saw his master's two brawny legs going handsomely over his head. Sir Thomas prided himself, indeed, in having his coachman and footman lusty young fellows, that had brought good characters for sobriety from their last places, and had laid him on his spine.*

Lord Thomas Manners, who learned the art of Broad-Sword exercise from Sir Thomas Parkyns, thus addresses his master, on May 21st, 1720, from Belvoir:—

"Happy is it for us that we have in this effeminate, weak Age of powder'd Essence-Bottles, and Curled Coxcombs, a Person of rough Manners, and a robust Constitution; one that can stand upon his own Legs, after Droves of those modern waxen Things have fallen before him; one that instructs

* Retrospective Review.

Englishmen to deserve the Title, and teaches 'em to make their Broad-Swords the Terror of all Europe. Men like you liv'd, when Greece knew her happiest Days. It was a Spirit like your's that instituted and supported the Olympic Games. But when their luxurious Neighbours once taught 'em to sleep till Twelve o' the Day, to pin up their Locks in Papers, to come from the Boxes of their Chariots into the Insides of 'em; to use Almond-Paste, and Rose-Water; in short, to quit Roast-Beef, and Hasty Pudding, for Soups and Ragouts; the Empire of the World was taken from them, and translated to the tough, sinewy Romans; and when they ceas'd to merit these Epithets, their Eagle drooped her Wings, and the Brawny Britons were the Favourites of Mars."

A fitting conclusion to the preceding notice of the much esteemed Bunny Park baronet, will be come to by bestowing a passing notice on the monumental memorial erected to his memory, in Broadmore church, Nottinghamshire. The "ruling passion" is made apparent, even after death had given Sir Thomas the last "Hugg." On one side of the monument he is represented in wrestling attitude; on another he appears thrown a back fall by Time. The following is a free translation of the Latin inscription :—

"Here lies, O Time! the victim of thy hand,
The noblest Wrestler on the British strand;
His nervous arm each bold opposer quell'd,
In feats of strength by none but thee excell'd;
Till springing up at the last trumpet's call,
He conquers thee, who, will have conquer'd all."

The inscription further depicts him as an estimable landlord; for it is recorded on the tablet, that with

his wife's fortune he purchased estates, and erected for the tenants new farm houses.

Sir Thomas Parkyns died in 1751.

In his will there is bequeathed a guinea a year to be wrestled for every midsummer day at Broadmore.

We venture to surmise that our north country readers—more especially those interested in the sport half a century ago—will be struck with a similarity in the wrestling career and character of Sir Thomas Parkyns, and one of the great ornaments and enthusiastic advocates of the northern ring, namely, Professor Wilson. To us it appears there is a striking similitude. One, like the other, ranks amongst the cleverest and most scientific in their different modes of wrestling; one, like the other, had about the same social standing; one, like the other, somewhat eccentric in early life. One delighted with encouraging and upholding his favourite amusement in Bunny Park; the other happy when he could get together a goodly muster of athletes from the villages, the valleys, and mountain sides of the Lake district, at Bowness, Low Wood, or Ambleside—all within easy walking distance of Elleray, his beautifully situate Windermere mansion.

WRESTLING IN SCOTLAND.

In the year 1827, a society styled the "Saint Ronan's Border Club," was established at Innerleithen, near Peebles, the object of which was to revive the old martial spirit of the Borders, to encourage the practice of out-door sports and pastimes, and to yield amusement to the visitors of this sequestered watering place. Lockhart, in his life of Sir Walter Scott, (after giving an account of the publication of the novel of *St. Ronan's Well*, in 1823,) thus proceeds to describe the establishment of the annual gathering at Innerleithen:—

Among other consequences of the revived fame of the place, a yearly festival was instituted for the celebration of *The St. Ronan's Border Games.* A club of *Bowmen of the Border*, arrayed in doublets of Lincoln green, with broad blue bonnets, and having the Ettrick Shepherd for Captain, assumed the principal management of this exhibition; and Sir Walter was well pleased to be enrolled among them, and during several years was a regular attendant, both on the Meadow, where (besides archery) leaping, racing, wrestling, stone-heaving, and hammer-throwing, went on opposite to the noble old Castle of Traquair, and at the subsequent banquet, where Hogg, in full costume, always presided as master of the ceremonies. In fact, a gayer spectacle than that of the *St. Ronan's Games*, in those days, could not well have been desired. The Shepherd, even when on the verge

of threescore, exerted himself lustily in the field, and seldom failed to carry off some of the prizes, to the astonishment of his vanquished juniors; and the *bon-vivants* of Edinburgh mustered strong among the gentry and yeomanry of Tweeddale to see him afterwards in his glory filling the president's chair with eminent success, and commonly supported on this—which was in fact the grandest evening of his year—by Sir Walter Scott, Professor Wilson, Sir Adam Ferguson, and *Peter* Robertson.

The Earl of Traquair was patron of the club, and among the members not mentioned by Lockhart, occur the names of the Duke of Buccleuch, Lord Napier, Robert Gladstone of Liverpool, William Blackwood, James Ballantyne, and Adam Wilson, captain of the Six-Feet Club.* At a later date, Glassford Bell, sheriff of Lanarkshire, took great interest in these sports.

The games continued to be celebrated yearly in the early autumn, and lasted two days, the second day being mostly devoted to archery. Among the various athletes who entered the lists, the following are probably the most noteworthy. Professor Wilson (Christopher North,) threw the hammer; James Hogg tried his hand at the bow and the rifle, but yet—in despite of Lockhart's praise—the Shepherd did more doughty deeds with the grey-goose quill than with either of those weapons. Robert Bell, from Jed Water, was the champion

* Professor Wilson was anxious to get enrolled in the Six-Feet Club, but could not manage it. He was just half-an-inch too short.

"putter" of the stone, and could have been matched against any man in the three kingdoms, in throwing the sixteen or twenty-one pound ball—he upon his knees, and his opponent on his feet. An advertisement appeared in a leading newspaper, to back him for £100 against all comers, the challenge to hold good for twelve months, but there was no one to take it up. The Harper brothers, farmers near Innerleithen, held several prizes for throwing the hammer; and Leyden of Denholme, the champion leaper, could spring thirty-two feet, at three standing leaps, including the backward and forward leaps over the same ground.

The first competition was held at Innerleithen on the 26th of September, 1827; and among other prizes competed for, the Six-Feet Club of Edinburgh gave a silver medal to the best wrestler in the back-hold style, as practised in Cumberland and Westmorland. The introduction of this mode of wrestling into Scotland, may probably be attributed to the great interest which Professor Wilson took in the formation of these games. The prize in 1827, was gained by George Scougal, a native of Innerleithen. On one side of the medal was the following inscription:—

"Presented by the Six-Feet Club, to the St. Ronan's Border Club, to be awarded to the best Wrestler, at their first Gymnastic Competition, at Innerleithen, 26th September, 1827."

And on the reverse side, the following quotation from Waller :—

"Great Julius, on the mountain bred,
A flock perchance or herd had led :
He who subdued the world had been
But the best Wrestler on the green."

Gained by GEORGE SCOUGAL, Innerleithen.
Thirty-two competitors.

Scougal carried off, also, the head prize for Wrestling, at the St. Ronan's Games, for the years 1828 and 1829. After performing these feats, he was "outlawed"—that is, he was excluded from contending again in the same arena, for the three years which followed. When past the prime of life, he was induced to enter the wrestling ring again, which he very unwillingly did, after much persuasion, and once more succeeded in bearing off first honours.

In his day, Scougal was looked upon as the champion wrestler on the Scottish side of the Borders. At the St. Ronan's Games, he gained six medals for wrestling and throwing the hammer; and, likewise, a considerable number of trophies at other local meetings. A stout massive built man, he stood five feet eleven inches high, and weighed from fifteen to sixteen stones. With little or no knowledge of scientific wrestling, he nevertheless proved more than a match for all comers, by the herculean amount of power he possessed in the shoulders and arms.

His usual mode of attack was to gather an opponent well to his breast, and then by sheer strength keep him there until a favourable opportunity presented itself to rush him upon his back. When excited or ruffled in temper, he gripped his man quickly and firmly, and then, in spite of all struggles or clicks, threw him over his hip. These movements were the nearest approach to science known to Scougal.

Scougal was a butcher by trade, and is thus referred to in the *Noctes Ambrosiana*, in the Shepherd's parlance: "Geordie Scougal slauchered a beast last market day at Innerleithen, and his meat's aye prime." On one occasion, he actually felled a bullock with a blow from his fist; and in the smithy, which adjoined his slaughter-house, he not unfrequently exhibited feats of surpassing strength, one of which was to lift a waggon axle and two wheels, with a heavy man seated at each end of the axle. His skill in throwing the hammer was well known, and during his early manhood he carried off most of the leading prizes. At several meetings, the Harpers came into competition with him, but never approached any nearer than second to the dual Border champion of wrestling and throwing the hammer. Old people, who remember Scougal's earliest efforts, describe him as a veritable Goliath of Gath in strength, but —unless unduly excited—as gentle as a woman in manner and bearing.

After Scougal's three years had elapsed, Robert Michie of Hawick, came to the fore as amateur wrestler. Michie took the belt at St. Ronan's, and kept it about two years. He was present at most of the gymnastic gatherings on the Borders, and carried off many prizes for wrestling and hammer throwing. At the Hawick Border Games in 1831, he threw Thomas Emmerson, from the neighbourhood of Carlisle,* after an exciting contest of some duration. His hammer throwing at St. Ronan's was inimitable, and has been described by the Ettrick Shepherd in the "Bridal of Polmood."

Michie is introduced anachronically into the "Royal Bridal," in Wilson's *Tales of the Borders*, after the following fashion :—

> At a distance from the pavilion, · · · was a crowd composed of some seven or eight hundred peasantry engaged in and witnessing the athletic games of the Borders. Among the competitors was one called Meikle Robin, or Robin Meikle. He was strength personified. His stature exceeded six feet; his shoulders were broad, his chest round, his limbs well and strongly put together. He was a man of prodigious bone and sinews. At throwing the hammer, at putting the stone, no man could stand before him. He distanced all who came against him, and, while he did so, he seemed to put forth not half his strength, while his skill appeared equal to the power of his arm.

The following notice of the wrestling at Saint Ronan's, for 1831, is copied from the *Edinburgh Literary Journal*:—

* Emmerson was a powerful built man, a mason by trade, who wrestled for several years in the Carlisle and other rings, with moderate success. He won the head prize at Hawick in 1835.

Wrestling is not a Scotch game, as will be conceded by every one who has been present at the Carlisle and Saint Ronan's games. There is strength enough among our peasantry, but it is the ore—it has never been moulded for a practical purpose. Men came forward on this occasion, who never would have dreamed of thrusting their noses into an English ring; and they set to work in a slovenly unhandsome way—some of them armed *cap-à-pie*—hat, coat, and shoes. Still, amid the motley crew you might recognise men who knew both how to seize and to wield their antagonists. The art only needs encouragement; and we trust next meeting will witness a better turn-out.

There were other local athletes, who figured in the ring at Saint Ronan's, almost a match for Scougal. George Best of Yarrow, tailor, possessed far more science than the Innerleithen butcher, and was the holder of several prizes. Best, likewise, finds a niche in the *Noctes Ambrosiana* of October, 1828, where the Shepherd is made to exclaim:—"Tibbie's married. The tailor carried her aff frae them a'—the flyin' tailor o' Ettrick, sir—him that can do fifteen yards, at hap-step-and-loup, back and forward on level grun'—stood second ae year in the ring at Carlisle—can put a stane within a foot o' Jedburgh Bell himsell, and fling the hammer neist best ower a' the border to Geordie Scougal o' Innerleithen."

In which year of grace, we wonder, did Best stand second in the Carlisle ring? Wilson's memory must have proved treacherous when he penned this sentence. At all events, if Best *did* wrestle second,

"ae year in the ring at Carlisle," it must have been for some minor prize, long since forgotten.

Abraham Clark of Calzie, farmer, a man of powerful frame, entered the ring after Scougal was "outlawed," and did some noteworthy feats.

Another man, also remembered as a prize taker in the ring at Saint Ronan's, was Walter Scott of Selkirk, carrier.

At Miles End, in Northumberland, athletic games were kept up until recently. Young men from both sides of the Borders entered keenly into these contests; and one noteworthy peculiarity of them was, that of keeping up the old national characteristic of Englishmen being pitted against Scotchmen, and Scotchmen against Englishmen. This mode of contesting was the means of producing many splendid feats of agility and prowess, but was apt to degenerate into mere exhibitions of warm blood, which too frequently ended in blows being exchanged by the rival combatants. Remnants of these contests may be witnessed to this day, at the annual fair at Stagshawbank, between the shepherds from the Reed, Liddle, Coquet, and Tyne, and those from the Slitrig, Jed, Oxmoor, Kail, and Teviot. Wrestling was always a leading sport at these gatherings; single-stick, tilting, leaping, and foot-racing, were also practised; and hence the devotion shown to these and similar athletic pastimes by the sturdy race of people living on both sides of the Cheviots.

IRISH WRESTLING.

THE "collar and elbow" is the national style of wrestling in Ireland—that is, to take hold of an opponent's collar with one hand, and his elbow with the other. The fall is won if an opponent touches the ground with his hand, knee, back, or side, as in the Cumberland and Westmorland style.

A wrestling match was witnessed in Phœnix Park, Dublin, in the autumn of 1876, which may serve to illustrate to some extent the manner of proceeding. A ring was formed, around which seven or eight thousand people gathered, and two coats laid in the centre of the ring. Presently a wrestler enters, and dons one of the coats, which was a challenge for any man to take up the other coat. Another wrestler shortly after enters, and then, when due preliminaries are gone through, the tussle commenced in earnest. But how it proceeded, or how it ended—whether the struggle was an arduous one, or the victory an easy one—our informant could not tell.

At the termination of the Cumberland and Westmorland wrestling held at the British Lion, Redcross Street, London, on August 21st, 1844, one Kelly, an Irishman, challenged any native of either of the

above counties, to wrestle for a sovereign, in the collar and elbow style, the gainer of the first three falls, out of five, to be the winner. This offer was accepted by Edward Stainton, a native of Westmorland. And after three-quarters of an hour's good play, Stainton had floored his man three times in succession. Kelly was second in the leaping match at the same sports.

[NOTE.—We regret exceedingly the great paucity of our information on the subject of Irish Wrestling. Enquiries were made in many and various ways, without success. Any information respecting two or three of the representative wrestlers of the Green Isle, addressed to the *local* publishers, will be very acceptable.]

CUMBERLAND AND WESTMORLAND WRESTLING.

Wrestlers of Cumberland,
  Good fellows all ;
Wrestlers of Westmorland,
  Stout lads and tall :
Ye who are thrown to-day,
Rise more alert and gay,
Next year make the play,
  Good fellows all.
  King Arthur's Round Table Ballad, 1824.

WRESTLING, as a matter of course, occupies a prominent position in our review of Northern Pastimes, more especially from the commencement to the end of the time to which our notices extend. Some of the other sports are now remembered only as illustrating the habits of a byegone period. In this last are to be classed Bull-baiting and Cock-fighting: condemned now as cruel and torturing by all classes, but deserving of record from their encouragement and popularity in times past. Others of a less objection-

able type are extinct as well. That almost all were looked upon with disfavour by a considerable portion of the community, in the old Puritan times of Cromwell, the following curious extract will abundantly testify. It is quoted from THE AGREEMENT OF THE ASSOCIATED MINISTERS AND CHURCHES OF THE COUNTIES OF CUMBERLAND AND WESTMERLAND. *London: Printed by T. L. for Simon Waterson, and are sold at the sign of the Globe in Paul's Churchyard, and by Richard Scot, Bookseller in Carlisle*, 1656.

"All scandalous persons hereafter mentioned are to be suspended from the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper: this is to say . . . any person that shall upon the Lord's Day use any dancing, playing at dice, or cards, or any other game, masking, wakes, shooting, playing, playing at football, stool ball, *Wrestling*; or that shall make resort to any Playes, interludes, fencing, bull baiting, bear baiting; or that shall use hawking, hunting, or coursing, fishing or fowling; or that shall publikely expose any wares to sale otherwise than is provided by an Ordinance of Parliament of the sixth of April, 1649 . . . . These Counties of Cumberland and Westmerland have been hitherto as a Proverb and a by-word in respect of ignorance and prophaneness; Men were ready to say of them as the Jews of Nazareth, Can any good thing come out of them?"

This intolerant anathema did not put a stop to the practice of Wrestling, on fine summer evenings, at

nearly all the villages of Cumberland and Westmorland—a practice, we opine, less detrimental to the formation of a good rural peasantry than loitering about or brawling in village ale-houses. It was, however, upwards of a century and a half after, before back-hold wrestling assumed the importance it has attained. A passing notice of doings in the ring, in a long ago period, may nevertheless be interesting.

In King Edward the Sixth's time, somewhere between 1547 and 1553, a gigantic youth of great strength and in wrestling practice, resided at Troutbeck, near Windermere. His name was Gilpin, or Herd. His mother was driven away from Furness with child—generally asserted in the neighbourhood—to one of the monks of Furness Abbey. The mother afterwards led a tramping and begging sort of life, and drew to a house in Troutbeck belonging to the Crown. The house and some adjoining land were conferred by the king on a retainer, who on attempting to take possession, met with determined opposition from the desperate woman, and her wild son Gilpin, or, as he was familiarly called, the "Cork Lad of Kentmere." This led to the "Lad" —then about twenty years old—being summoned to London. He set off on foot, in a home-spun dress, and after many strange adventures and shifty expedients, reached the end of his long journey. Soon after arriving, the king held a meeting for athletic contests. The wild-looking northerner was

present, and ascended the stage to contend with the champion wrestler. He easily won the first fall. In the second, he threw the champion clear off the stage. After astonishing the spectators by several other muscular performances, the king sent for him, and enquired who and what he was, and where he came from. He told the king he did not know his own name, but "folk commonly co' me the Cork Lad o' Kentmere!" The king desiring to know the sort of food he lived on at home, received this quaint reply, "Thick porridge an' milk that a mouse might walk on dry shod, to my breakfast; an' the sunny side of a wedder to my dinner, when I can get it." Being acknowledged champion, the king wished to confer some reward as a distinction, and asked him to state what he wished. He begged to have the house he lived in at Troutbeck, and land adjacent to get peat off, and wood from Troutbeck Park for fire. These were soon made over to him. He did not enjoy the generous gift for any lengthened period; for at the age of forty-two, he got so injured in attempting to pull up a tree by the roots, that he died from the effects Leaving no children or will, the estate reverted to the Crown, and King Charles the First granted it to Huddleston Philipson of Calgarth.

It appears that Kentmere Hall in Kentmere—a secluded pastoral dale, some dozen miles north of Kendal, and running in another dozen miles up to the steep sides of Hill Bell, Nan Beild, and High

Street—was built at the time the "Cork Lad" was in the valley. During the building, he performed a surprising feat of strength, by placing, without any assistance, a huge beam on the walls. On a Mr. Birkett being applied to by James Clarke, the author of the "Survey of the Lakes," for particulars respecting the well nigh incredible feat, he replied in the following sensible letter :—

"I have taken dimensions of the beam at Kentmere Hall, which is thirty feet in length and thirteen inches by twelve-and-a-half in thickness. There is no inscription on it, as you mentioned. I shall inform you what has been given by tradition, (and I had it from a man that was *one hundred and four years old* when he died). When the Hall was building, and the workmen gone to dinner, this man, whose name was Herd, happened to be there, and while they were at dinner, laid it up himself. At that time the Scots made frequent incursions into England. He with his bow and arrows killed many of them in coming off the mountains, at a place which still retains the name of 'Scot's Rake,' which is about a mile from where he lived."

In the days of brave Queen Bess, lived Richard Mulcaster, whose father represented the city of Carlisle in Parliament. "By ancient parentage and lininal discent," Mulcaster was "an esquier borne; by the most famous Queen Elizabeth's prerogative gift," parson of Stanford Rivers church, in Essex. Being an earnest student, he became not only

proficient in the Greek and Oriental languages, but also an expert archer, and thought it not unbecoming to his cloth to shoot by times, at "the targets for glory at Mile End Green." This good old clergyman loved athletic exercises so well, that among other learned treatises, he issued one in 1581 entitled "Positions; wherein those Primitive Circumstances be examined, which are necessarie for the training up of Children, either for Skill in their Booke, or Healthe in their Bodie," which was dedicated to his patron, Queen Elizabeth. In this quaint old quarto volume, the author discourses on the ancient art of "wrastling" as becometh one reared on Cumbrian soil. "Clemens Alexandrinus," says he, "which lived at Rome in Galenus' time, in the third book of his 'Pedagogue or Training Maister,' in the title of exercise, rejecting most kinds of wrastling, yet reserveth one as well beseemeing a civill trained man, whom both seemeliness for grace and profitableness for goode healthe do seeme to recommende. Then an exercise it is, and healthfully it may be used; if discretion overlook it, our countrey will allow it. Let us, therefore, use it as Clemens of Alexandria commendes it for, and make choice in our market. Wherefore not to deale with the catching pancratical kind of wrastling which used all kindes of hould to cast and overcome his adversarie, nor any other of that sorte which continuance hath rejected and custome hath refused, I have picked out two which be both civill for use,

and in the using upright, without any great stouping. It is a friend to the head, bettereth the bulke, and strengtheneth the sinews. Thus much for wrastling, wherein, as in all other exercises, the training maister must be both cunning to judge of the thing, and himself present to prevente harme when the exercise is in hand."

Leaving this loyal old parson to demonstrate still further his "Positions" to the boys of the Merchant Tailors' and St. Paul's, of both of which schools he was head master, we come across another worthy, Robert Dodd, commonly called "Miller Robin," who lived some years at Brough in Westmorland. He was possessed of such bodily strength as to be able to take a bushel of wheat, (a Carlisle bushel of ninety-six quarts,) between his teeth, and toss it over his shoulder. He would also lie down, and with six bushels of wheat placed on his back, weighing something like nine hundred and fifty pounds, rise up with apparently little exertion. He was also an expert wrestler, and very few who knew the man would contend with him for the annual prize belts. The following Epitaph on a Wrestler, from Miscellaneous Poems, by Ewan Clark of Standing Stone, near Wigton, 1779, is applicable to "Miller Robin."

Here lies the man beneath this stone,
Who often threw, but ne'er was thrown :
Before him his antagonists fell,
As many a broken bone can tell ;
Death cry'd, "I'll try this man of strength !"
And laid him here at his full length.

Soon after Robin had succumbed, there came out a Herculean wrestler, named John Woodall, a small statesman, and a native of Gosforth in West Cumberland. At Egremont sports, he came against one Carr, a shoemaker. Carr gained the fall, and at the King's Arms in the evening, began chaffing Woodall, who in a fit of momentary excitement, caught hold of his antagonist, and held him up to the ceiling of the room; and, by the waistband of his breeches, hung him dangling and struggling to a strong crook. We have alluded elsewhere to a wonderful feat of bodily strength, by Robert Atkinson, the Sleagill giant, in carrying a conveyance called a "carr" out of a dyke-back, on to the turnpike road, near Kendal. This unlucky vehicle had defied the efforts of three or four persons to drag it out, by tugging at the shafts and wheels. Very big men, since Atkinson's time, have somehow ceased to be wrestlers.

Two stalwart Cumbrians will, however, be brought under the notice of our readers in the following description of Ancient Sports upon Stone Carr, near Greystoke. This particular, and, at the time, highly popular meeting, is introduced to show the description of sports that prevailed in numerous villages throughout the two Northern Counties at the latter part of last and the beginning of the present century. No doubt, the reader will be struck with the wide difference in the value of the prizes, as compared with those given in the present day, when the two

Pooleys would get over forty pounds in money and cups, at the Burgh Barony Races of 1877. Stone Carr Sports had been held for many years previous to 1787, and a similar list of prizes given annually to these enumerated; and they seemed to give entire satisfaction to the crowds who assembled from Penrith, Keswick, and all the neighbouring villages.

For the Horses - 1st, a Bridle, value £1 6s.
Do. do. - 2nd, a pair of Spurs 0 6s.
For the Wrestlers - - - - A Leathern Belt
For the Leapers - - - - A pair of Gloves
For the Foot Racers - - - A Handkerchief
For the Dog Coursers A Pewter Quart Pot

Many other small prizes were given, and they brought out a strong determined spirit of contention amongst the competitors. The one who had finally—after many sturdy contests—the belt placed over his shoulders, was regarded as quite a distinguished individual. If there were a dance in the evening, it of course made him a personage of no small account. Old and young regarded wrestling science, wrestling distinction and strength, with keen relish. The Sunday following victory, the champion might be seen marching to church, decorated with the belt, and on the Sunday following showing off at another neighbouring church. And this was not the only distinction: the lasses, one and all, looked on him favourably. He had no difficulty in

getting a sweetheart, and matrimonial engagements frequently followed the prize winning; for amongst rustics, as well as in the higher classes, distinction is invariably looked on as a pretty good passport to a lady's favour.

Sometimes disputes would arise—for northern blood at sports and fairs is soon up—and then probably a punishing fight ensues. This, however, rarely happens. When it does take place, it is a fair stand up fisty-cuff fight. A very severe contest occurred at the Stone Carr meeting, which from the amazing stature and strength of the combatants, is deserving of record. Mr. Andrew Huddleston—an enthusiastic admirer of rustic sports—threw up the belt as a competitor. The country people for miles round about his own neighbourhood gave him the *sobriquet* of "Girt Andrew," from his giant-like stature and great strength. He came against one Thomas Harrison of Blencow, another Titanic specimen of humanity. Probably no two of like Herculean proportions ever stood together to take hold. "Girt Andrew" got grassed with a tremendous thud, and directly offered to fight his opponent. Harrison, no ways backward, accepted the challenge, and both prepared for a set-to. An unexpected interference occurred. A Presbyterian preacher, then stationed at Penruddock, persuaded them to desist, and apparently seemed to have got the burly combatants to depart home peaceably without a resort to blows. The feud,

however, proved to be glossed over, and not healed, for even after jointly partaking of a friendly glass, Mr. Huddleston again threw down the gauntlet, and again it was taken up. The fight was obstinate and terrific, both receiving fearful punishment. In the end Harrison triumphed. In after years they continued good neighbours, without any manifestation of ill feeling.

Thomas Harrison had a brother named Launcelot, residing at Penruddock, who followed the occupation of a blacksmith. This man also possessed amazing strength, and was of gigantic stature. When dead, his remains were taken to Greystoke, and buried there. Some years after, the grave digger, in making another grave, dug into Launcelot's. He took out the jaw bone, and it proved to be half as big again as the sexton's, who was a stout six feet man.*

Another Penruddock champion died in 1791, at the age of four score and six years, who was styled at that date, "the last of the northern giants." This was Matthias Nicholson, who, through a lengthened period, stood unrivalled at all the wrestlings and other athletic exercises and manly sports, which took place in the neighbourhood. His height was six feet two inches, and his bulk in proportion.

The top of High Street, a mountain near Hawes-water, in Westmorland, seems a strange situation for holding Wrestlings, Jumpings, Horse Races, and

* Clarke's Survey.

other sports. This mountain is 2,700 feet above the level of the sea—a breezy elevation, forsooth, for such pastimes. Nevertheless, they were held annually on the 10th of July for many years, and long continued to be a flourishing institution. The primary object of the gathering was this:—On the heaves or pastures of mountain sheep farms, stray sheep are kept and cared for. The shepherds, on the day appointed, drive them to the place of meeting, and give them up to the rightful owners, who identify them by certain marks. After this important business has been gone through, a dinner is set out, and washed down with libations of ale or spirits, and, by the time keen appetites are satisfied, numerous additions have increased the assemblage, and then commence the wrestling, &c. It forcibly illustrates the deep hold these pastimes have in the minds of the rural population, when they are indulged in at such meetings and in such situations. From information which has been gathered from an aged native of Kentmere, it appears that the High Street gatherings fell into neglect, and were discontinued about sixty years since. They have been supplemented by similar ones—minus the races and wrestlings—held annually in November at the little road side hostelry on Kirkstone, and at the "Dun Bull" in Mardale, where sports and wrestlings are held annually on Whit-Monday. Mardale is at other times a lonely, little frequented dale, at the head of Haweswater. On one occasion the landlady

of the "Dun Bull," on being remonstrated with for supplying sour porter in June, excused herself by saying: "Why, that's varra queer! It *was* freysh enuff last grouse time!"

Other places—situate advantageously for holding them—have now their shepherd's gatherings. At the High Street meetings a fox hunt was mostly an important part of the day's proceedings. The following fearful incident happened during a hot chase. Blea Water Cragg is doubtless well known to many summer tourists. It has a sheer fall of about three hundred yards, and the rock in many places appears to jut out even with the bottom. A man named Dixon, from Kentmere, was following a hard run fox, when he slipped and fell from the top of the rocks to the bottom. He was carried home, with no broken bones, but bruised and battered in a shocking manner; nearly all the skin and hair of his head cut off by the sharp-edged rocks—scalped, in fact. In falling, he struck against the rocks many times, and yet, strange to say, by his own account, he did not feel the shocks from first falling over to finally landing at the bottom of the perilous descent. Dizzy, stunned, and unable to stand, he had the chase uppermost in his mind, shouting as well as he was able to the first that got to him: "Lads! lads! t' fox is gane oot at t' hee end! Lig t' dogs on, an' I'll cum seun!" Insensibility soon followed this exhortation, and he was carried home, but recovered ultimately. The rocks have since been known by the name of "Dixon's three jumps."

Wrestling on High Street seems strange, but stranger still is wrestling on the frozen surface of Windermere lake. The one we have to record happened in 1785, during an excessively severe frost. When the ice had attained great thickness, a project was started for roasting a large ox on it. All preparations being made, "Rawlinson's Nab" was fixed upon as the locality for carrying on operations. The eventful day arrived without any break in the frost, and a vast concourse from all parts of the surrounding country assembled to enjoy the unusual sight. Creature comforts, in the shape of eatables and lots of beer, were not wanting. The enlivening strains of a band of music from Kendal, too, gave animation to the scene. The wrestling was in clogs, such as country people at that time generally wore. These primitive coverings for the feet, though well adapted for sliding on the ice, were clumsy to wrestle in; nevertheless, the falls were eagerly contested, and delighted the throng of spectators. The final victor received a belt.

From the interesting autobiography of Thomas Bewick, the celebrated wood engraver, who visited an uncle at Ainstable about the year 1776, we learn the following particulars respecting the feats of one of his cousins in the wrestling ring:—"I remained at Ainstable about a week, during which time I rambled about the neighbourhood, visited my friends at Kirkoswald and elsewhere, and spent what time

I could spare in fishing for trout in the Croglin. · · I began to think of moving abroad; and my cousin having occasion to go to Carlisle, I went with him there, where we parted. · · At Langholm, my landlord who was a Cumberland man and knew my relatives there, was very kind to me; and among other matters concerning them, told me that my cousin who had accompanied me to Carlisle had won nine belts in his wrestling matches in that county."

We next come to a curious, remarkable, and noteworthy old custom at which, towards the latter end of the eighteenth century, and the early part of the nineteenth, wrestlings, and a variety of other sports, were much patronised. The celebration of BRIDEWAINS or BIDDEN WEDDINGS were extremely popular in Cumberland. All the people of the country side were invited. For the amusement of the spectators assembled, prizes were given for sports of various kinds, as will be found described in the graphic dialect poem of John Stagg, the blind bard.

Some for a par o' mittens loup't,
  Some wrustl'd for a belt;
Some play'd at pennice-steans for brass;
  And some amaist gat fell't.
Hitch-step-an'-loup some tried for spwort,
  Wi' mony a sair exertion;
Others for bits o' 'bacca gurn'd,
  An' sec like daft devarshon
    Put owre that day.

If any reader wishes for a full description of the various incidents and details connected with this old wedding custom, he is recommended to consult Stagg's poem of *The Bridewain*, from which the preceding lines are quoted.

The people of the district were generally invited to these weddings by public advertisement, specimens of which still exist in the files of one or two of the earliest local newspapers. The following is given as a curiosity in its way from the *Cumberland Pacquet.*

BIDDEN WEDDINGS.

Suspend for one Day all your cares and your labours,
And come to this Wedding, kind friends and good Neighbours.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, That the Marriage of Isaac Pearson with Frances Atkinson, will be solemnized in due form in the Parish Church of Lamplugh, on Monday next, the 30th of May, instant—immediately after which the Bride and Bridegroom, with their attendants, will proceed to Lonefoot, in the said Parish, where the Nuptials will be celebrated by a variety of Rural entertainments.

Then come one and all,
At Hymen's soft call,
From Whitehaven, Workington, Harrington, Dean,
Haile, Ponsonby, Blaing, and all places between;
From Egremont, Cockermouth, Parton, Saint Bees,
Dint, Kinneyside, Calder, and parts joining these;
And the country at large may flock if they please.
Such sports there will be as have seldom been seen—
Such Wrestling, and Fencing, and Dancing between;
And Races for Prizes, and Frolic and Fun,
By Horses, by Asses, and Dogs will be run:—

And you'll all go home happy—as sure as a gun.
In a word—such a Wedding can ne'er fail to please,
For the Sports of Olympus were trifles to these.
Nota Bene—You'll please to observe that the Day
Of this grand Bridal Pomp is the thirtieth of May;
When 'tis hop'd that the sun to enliven the sight,
Like the Flambeau of Hymen, will deign to burn bright.
Lamplugh, May 20th, 1786.

The next one which we shall quote, contents itself with a plain prose description of the various attractions.

Richard and Ann Allason present their compliments to their Friends and the Public in general, and beg leave to inform them that they intend to have a BRIDEWAIN at Southwaite, in the Parish of Brigham, on Thursday, the 25th day of May, instant. There will be the following Sports—such as Horse Races, Dog Races, Wrestling, Jumping, and Foot Races, &c., &c., &c., and various other amusements too tedious to mention, to entertain them; and they will think themselves happy with their attendance.

Southwaite, 1st May, 1809.

The last Bridewain notice we shall give celebrates the marriage of Henry and Sarah Robinson of High Lorton, near Cockermouth, on June 6th, 1811. This advertisement flows into sprightly verse as follows:—

'Tis Love, immortal Power! gives birth
To healthful Sports and Sprightliest Mirth.
Awhile your Drudgery and Pains
Forego, ye jocund Nymphs and Swains.
We think it only Right to acquaint ye,
That each sort may get Sweethearts plenty!
For those who Pastime love and Fun,
We've Horses, Dogs, and Men to Run;

Athletic Sports we'll set before ye,
And Heats renown'd in Ancient Story;—
Leaping and Wrestling for the Strong,
Enough to please you—*Come Along!*

Professor Wilson—himself a proficient in the noble pastime, and whose great literary attainments assisted materially to elevate *Blackwood's Magazine* to the proud eminence it attained in his time,—pays in its pages the following eloquent tribute to Wrestling, which was, in his younger days, the principal athletic exercise in the North of England.

It is impossible to conceive the intense and passionate interest taken by the whole northern population in this most rural and muscular amusement. For weeks before the great Carlisle annual contest, nothing else is talked of on road, field, flood, foot or horseback; we fear it is thought of even in church, which we regret and condemn; and in every little comfortable public within a circle of thirty miles diameter, the home-brewed quivers in the glasses on the oaken tables to knuckles smiting the boards in corroboration of the claims to the championship of Grahame, a Cass, a Laughlin, Solid Yak, a Wilson, or a Weightman. A political friend of ours—a staunch fellow—in passing through the lakes last autumn, heard of nothing but the contest for the county, which he had understood would be between Lord Lowther (the sitting member) and Mr. Brougham. But to his sore perplexity, he heard the claims of new candidates, to him hitherto unknown; and on meeting us at that best of inns, the White Lion, Bowness, he told us with a downcast and serious countenance that Lord Lowther would be ousted, for that the struggle, as far as he could learn, would ultimately be between Thomas Ford of Egremont, and William Richardson of Caldbeck, men of no landed property, and probably Radicals. • • • It is, in our opinion, and according to our taste,

not easy, to the most poetical and picturesque imagination, to create for itself a more beautiful sight than the ring at Carlisle · · · · Fifteen thousand people, perhaps, are there, all gazing anxiously on the candidates for the county. Down goes Cass, Weightman is the standing member; and the agitation of a thousand passions, a suppressed shudder and an under-growl, moves the mighty multitude like an earthquake. No savage anger, no boiling rage of ruined blacklegs, no leering laughter of mercenary swells—sights and sounds which we must confess do sicken the sense at Newmarket and Moulsey—but the visible and audible movements of calm, strong, temperate English hearts, free from all fear of ferocity, and swayed for a few moments of sublime pathos by the power of nature working in victory or defeat.

We may be allowed to supplement the foregoing with a remark, that there are two things which natives of the Lake Country, and the rural parts of Cumberland and Westmorland, who have migrated southwards, often in their absence sigh for. The one is "a good stiff clim' amang t' fells;" and the other, "a snug seat aroond some russlin' ring."

MELMERBY ROUNDS.

MELMERBY is one of the finest types of a fell-side rural village left in Cumberland, with its cheerful dwellings scattered here and there—single or in groups,—its old manor hall and miniature church, and its spacious green spreading over fully fourteen acres of land. The village nestles close under Hartside, one of the Crossfell range of mountains, on the direct road from Penrith to Alston, over which the pack-horse bell continued to tinkle, clear and loud, to a much more recent period than it did on the great highways of commerce. This interesting fact has not been overlooked by Miss Powley, in her *Echoes of Old Cumberland.*

When the staunch pack-horse gang of yore
The Fell's unbroken rigours faced,
With stores for miners 'mid the moor,
The Dane's stronghold at ten miles passed;
Then up the steeps their burden bore,
For trackless, treeless, ten miles more.
. . . . .
When the staunch troop, with travel sore,
Passed up within the Helm-cloud's veil,
And 'scaped the blast—yet heard it roar
Below in many a western dale;—
When they, to crown the march severe,
Defiled through summits bleak and brown;
With sudden speed, and louder cheer,
Came clattering down to Alston town,
Round which the wide fells darkly peer,
And grasping winter cheats the year.

The Melmerby folk to this day are pastoral in occupation, intercourse, and habits. Their conversation, running for the most part on rural topics, is plentifully interlarded with such expressions as "Fetchin' t' kye heàm," "Fodderin' t' sheep," and "Takin' t' nag to t' smiddy." Occasionally, the blood runs warmer with excitement and curiosity, when a shrill cry like the following rings through the village streets, "Run wid t' reàpes, lad! A coo's i' t' mire!"

At the Gale, within a mile of the village, where the land rests principally on a limestone bottom, the produce of cream is not of that dubious quality known to pent-up city dames, but so rich and thick that a spoon will almost stand upright in it. The cream of this dairy has frequently been tested with

one of the old copper pennies of George the Third coinage, which formidable weight it always bore triumphantly on the top.

For fully a century, and probably a much longer period, Melmerby has been known as a noted place for upholding the manly back-hold wrestling of the North. On Old Midsummer Day—that is, on the 5th of July of each year—this village commenced its annual two-days' sports, which consisted of prizes for wrestling, leaping, foot-racing, dog-trailing, etc. The wrestling took place on that part of the green known as the cock-pit, where many a doughty champion has been sent sprawling at full length on his back. Although the amount given in prizes was small,* the entry of names was always large, from sixty to seventy being the average number; while more than four-score men have contended at various times. By being held at the season of the year when the days were longest, and when they wore their sunniest aspect, Melmerby Rounds were invariably attended by vast concourses of spectators. The Alstonians used to muster remarkably strong; the miners and others coming over Hartside in considerable droves from that town, and the neighbouring villages of Nenthead and Garrigill-gates. So great became the celebrity of the Melmerby ring, that first-rate wrestlers have frequently travelled as

* "Melmerby Annual Sports will take place on Monday, the 6th day of July, 1846, when the following Prizes will be given to contend for:—£2 to Wrestle for; £2 for a Hound Race; and handsome prizes for Running, Leaping, and other amusements, as usual."—[*Advertisement.*]

far as thirty and forty miles to throw and be thrown upon its village green. Buying and selling was a thing unknown. One friend might give way to another sometimes; but, as a rule, it was purely the honour of becoming victor, for the time being, that emulated most of the competitors.

A veritable giant in height and strength, who was in his prime about 1805, being ambitious to excel as an athlete, attended these sports for several years, but never succeeded in carrying off a single prize. This was Teasdale Thompson of High Rotherup, near Alston, whose height exceeded six feet two inches, and whose weight was in proportion to his height. Among well-known men who attended these meetings, but failed to achieve success, may be mentioned Robinson of Renwick, and William Earl of Cumwhitton, the former of whom figured several times.

About a quarter of a century ago, the squire of Melmerby Hall interested himself a good deal in establishing spring and "back-end" fairs in the village, for the sale of cattle, sheep, &c.; and on this account it was thought better to abolish the annual Rounds. Accordingly this ancient gathering came to a sudden and unexpected collapse, about the year 1850, after having existed in an unbroken link for fully a century.

The following is as complete a list of the winners of the wrestling at Melmerby Rounds, as we have been able to collect. The local newspapers were

carefully ransacked for intelligence, but being found singularly barren in this respect, our information had to be gathered in almost every instance from aged fell-side chroniclers, who had either been frequent or occasional attenders at these meetings, the principal of whom was Mr. John Dodd of Broadmeadows, Melmerby.

About 1788 Adam Dodd of Langwathby Mill, won *several* years.

About 1798, James Fawcett, miner, Nenthead.
„ 1799, „ „ „
„ 1800, „ „ „
„ 1801, „ „ „
„ 1802, „ „ „
„ 1803, „ „ „
„ 1804, „ „ „
„ 1809, Thomas Golightly, miner, Alston.

This wrestler afterwards removed to the West Cumberland mining district; and in February, 1819, was killed by the fall of part of a roof in one of the Whitehaven coal pits.

About 1810, Robert Rowantree, shepherd, Kingwater.

About 1815, Andrew Armstrong, farmer, Sowerby Hall.

About 1816, Thomas Peat, farmer's son, Blencow.
„ 1817, John Dobson, Cliburn.
„ 1818, John Robley, Scarrowmannock.
„ 1819, „ „

Robley emigrated to America several years after this date.

About 1820, Isaac Maughan, Alston.

„ 1821, „ „

Maughan settled in Newcastle-on-Tyne, where he died during the cholera of 1832.

About 1823, J. Spottiswoode, miner, Alston.

„ 1825, John Weightman, husbandman, Hayton.

About 1826, John Weightman, husbandman, Hayton.

Weightman won two years, and received a guinea and the belt each time, these being the usual awards to the victor at that date.

1828, Thomas Armstrong, Carlisle; Elliot (perhaps of Cumrew) wrestled second. Bowman, of the Gale, won the second day's wrestling.

About 1830, Joseph Graham, Dufton Wood, Appleby.

About 1833, Jonathan Woodmas, Alston.

1838, Thomas Morton, farmer, The Gale, 1st; Isaac Farlam, Bowness-on-Solway, 2nd.

About 1839, Thomas Morton, farmer, The Gale.

On one occasion Morton wrestled through the ring without taking his coat off.

About 1841, John Salkeld, land-surveyor, Huddlesceugh.

1844, *First day:* Joseph Elliot, Croglin, 1st; Thomas Teasdale, Ousby, 2nd. (Sixty-five names entered, including John Buck, John Milburn, and Joseph Morton.) *Second day:* John Nixon, Langwathby, 1st; John Slee, Blencow, 2nd.

About 1845, Joseph Shepherd, Crewgarth, Melmerby.

1847, Joseph Morton, farmer, The Gale, 1st John Milburn, Weardale, 2nd.

Joseph Morton also won once or twice on the second day. John Milburn stopped at Melmerby on his way home from the Carlisle meeting, at which latter place he carried off the head prize the two following years.

About 1850, Joseph Morton, farmer, The Gale.

Morton threw Halliwell of Penrith, and, we believe, Anthony Mc.Donald of Appleby wrestled up with him. This was the last Round held at Melmerby.

LANGWATHBY ROUNDS.

LANGWATHBY, like its twin-sister Melmerby, is strictly a rural village, made up of snug homesteads, dropped here and there in picturesque confusion. Crossing the bridge from the Penrith side, and coming in sight of its modest church and spacious green, the most familiar sounds which formerly fell upon the ear were the lowing of cattle, the bleating of sheep, and the barking of dogs. The pastoral stillness which once prevailed, however, is now abruptly broken by the shrill whistle of the passing train, the snorting and screeching of engines, and the heavy thuds which resound from the "shunting" and reloading of railway waggons immediately above.

This old-world village, with few chances and changes to record, has found a native bard to plead feelingly for the obscurity which the dim past has wrapped around its history.

> O ! spot of all the land alone
> Unsung, unheard of, and unknown ;
> Dim background of life's busy stage,
> Scarce named in local history's page.

Neglected spot! what hast thou done,
That, ever since the world begun,
Thy name proscribed hath seemed to be,
In legend, tale, or minstrelsy?
That e'en no rustic bard hath owned thee,
And thrown a wreath of song around thee?

However much the paucity of general incidents may be felt in reviewing the past history of this Cumberland village, it is pleasing to note that Langwathby and Melmerby vie with each other in antiquity as promoters or "handers down" of local athletic pastimes.

The famous Adam Dodd, "the Cock of the North," lived and died at Langwathby Mill, which place is still—or was recently—inhabited and owned by the same family. The last Adam Dodd of that ilk, was killed half a century after the death of the first Adam, on his homeward journey with horse and cart from Alston, while turning a sharp angle of the road a little above Melmerby.

Langwathby Rounds, unlike those at Melmerby, were held annually in the midst of "winter and cold weather"—that is to say, on New Year's Day and the day following. Wrestling formed by far the greatest attraction of these primitive gatherings; the yeomen, farmers, and husbandmen from the neighbouring hamlets being the principal competitors. The sports took place, as a general rule, in a field close to the village which belongs to Mr. John Hodgson; but on some few occasions they were held on the opposite or western side of the river

Eden. The prizes given were of small value, but great honour. During the latter part of the last century, a narrow leathern belt of meagre appearance, or a pair of buckskin breeches, was almost the only trophy given for wrestling. In the year 1816, when James Robinson won, a couple of guineas was the full amount offered; and this sum, we suppose, was never exceeded till many years after the King of Mardale and the Bishop of Lichfield's brother had carried off the principal prizes.

About the year 1820, on New Year's Day, the ground was covered with a coating of snow three or four inches deep, when a curious scene took place during the wrestling. It so happened that Isaac Mason of Croglin, was drawn against Isaac Westmorland of Ousby. Mason—well known for his smuggling adventures and his numerous eccentricities—entered the ring wearing an old home-spun overcoat, so thick and patched that it set at nought all Westmorland's attempts to clasp his arms around it. No persuasion could induce Mason to try and accommodate matters by stripping. He would not move a jot; and in the meantime his opponent was becoming quite numb and frigid with cold. At length Mason showed signs of relenting, and ultimately took off the obnoxious overcoat. Still Westmorland's arms were found to be too short, and refused to meet. Continuing therefore to "doff" what was most cumbersome—off went the coat, then the waistcoat, and finally Mason stood stripped

to his "sark" in the snow, with nothing on but his trousers, where his opponent managed to keep him standing until he, in his turn, was nearly starved to death!

Among other minor prizes at Langwathby, a pair of garters was given to the boy who proved himself to be the fleetest runner. About forty years since this prize was carried off by a youth of the village, who afterwards became a successful rower, and, as one of the athletes of Queen's College, Oxford, won the silver oar twice in succession.

A dance on the green among the village girls of four or five years old, formed a pretty rural sight, even when witnessed amid the cheerless snow. At the conclusion of these jocund rounds, each little maiden was presented with a bright ribbon—such mementoes being popularly spoken of as *fancies*. And while the procession of fiddlers and villagers were marshalling in order, it was no unusual thing to hear an aged dame calling from her cottage door: "Noo, honies, run an' git ye're *fancies!*"

The boys' race and the leaping usually succeeded the dancing on the green; and by the time these pastimes were concluded, daylight had either gone or was fast fading away. Owing to darkness setting in thus early, lanterns were frequently in great request among the rough-spun frequenters of the wrestling ring.

Following close in the rear of the New Year's pastimes, came the ancient custom of *stanging* on

the Twelfth Night. A procession of young fellows —dressed in fantastic garbs as clowns, accompanied by one in woman's attire, and preceded by a couple of fiddlers—paraded the village streets. Calling in rotation at the various houses on their way, the "woman" commenced operations by sweeping up the fireside with a besom, which she carried for that purpose, and then the leading clown delivered a ludicrous speech to the inmates of the house. One Brunskill, shoemaker and rustic humourist, is still remembered as being by far the cleverest clown who figured at these Stangings. To his credit let it be mentioned that his mirth was always kept well within the limits of decorum and decency.

The Langwathby Rounds continued to flourish after the Melmerby ones had passed away, being kept up for full twenty years longer, and consequently extended over a still greater period of time. The more intelligent dwellers at this hamlet give it as their opinion, that so long as the Rounds continued to be of a secluded character, and were almost entirely taken part in by the villagers and the rural population, living under the shadow of Crossfell or Hartside, things generally went well and smoothly; and that it was reserved for these latter days to open up new roads, offer larger prizes, and introduce a greater influx of "riff-raff" and unruly characters from the towns, after which period the annual gatherings became more and more degraded by tolerating unseemly abuses. About the year

1870, having sunk in social status, these Rounds were finally given up, lest some riot or other unpleasant circumstance might crop up, as did at Armathwaite, between the English and Irish navvies, employed in cutting the extension of the Midland line of railway from Settle to Carlisle.

The following is as full a list of the winners of the wrestling at the Langwathby Rounds as we have been able to collect together, from a variety of out-of-the-way and other sources.

About 1788, Adam Dodd of Langwathby Mill, won *several* years.

About 1809, Paul Gedling, Culgaith, 1st; Isaac Dodd, Langwathby Mill, 2nd.

Dodd broke a blood vessel in the wrestle up, owing to which both men left loose; the prize, of course, being awarded to Gedling. Isaac Dodd farmed Barrock Gill, near Carlisle, for many years after this event.

1816, James Robinson, gamekeeper, Hackthorpe.

1817, Thomas Peat, Blencow, 1st; George Robinson, Langwathby, 2nd.

Robinson of Hackthorpe, and Joe Abbot of Thornthwaite, also wrestled.

1818, Thomas Richardson, Hesket-new-Market, known as "The Dyer," 1st; John Dobson, Cliburn, 2nd.

About 1820, Isaac Mason, Croglin.

About 1824, John Holmes, King of Mardale.

About 1826, John Bowstead, yeoman, Beckbank.

Bowstead was one of the Bishop of Lichfield's younger brothers.

1829, Joseph Thompson, Caldbeck, 1st; — Milburn, 2nd.

Thompson was only an eleven stone man; while Milburn stood six feet two inches, and weighed nearly sixteen stones. Thompson also distinguished himself by throwing Ireland and Bird, both good wrestlers.

About 1830, Matthew Dixon, Penrith.

About 1831, George Bird, farmer, Langwathby.

1832, *First day:* Thomas Dobson, Sleagill. *Second day:* William Warwick, Eamont Bridge.

About 1833, Richard Chapman, Patterdale, 1st; Benson of Hunsanby, 2nd.

About 1834, Richard Chapman, Patterdale.

„ 1835, George Bird, farmer, Langwathby.

„ 1836, Robt. Gordon, husbandman, Plumpton.

„ 1837, George Bird, farmer, Langwathby.

„ 1838, „ „ „

„ 1839, — Moore, shoemaker, Melmerby.

„ 1840, Thomas Morton, The Gale, Melmerby.

About 1841, John Spedding, husbandman, Skirwith.

„ 1842, Thomas Morton, The Gale, Melmerby.

About 1843, Anthony Mc.Donald, Appleby.

„ 1844, „ „ „

1845, *First day:* J. Shadwick, Lazonby, 1st; John Robinson, Langwathby, 2nd. *Second day:* William Buck, Temple Sowerby, 1st; John Buck Temple Sowerby, 2nd.

About 1846, Anthony Mc.Donald, Appleby.

1847, *First day:* Anthony Mc.Donald, Appleby, 1st; John Shadwick, 2nd. *Second day:* Joseph Halliwell, Penrith, 1st; John Shadwick, 2nd.

About 1848, Joseph Halliwell, Penrith.

1849, William Buck, Temple Sowerby, 1st; John Shadwick, 2nd.

About 1850, Anthony Mc.Donald, Appleby.

„ 1851, „ „ „

„ 1852, „ „ „

Anthony Mc.Donald won seven times in all, some of which were second day's prizes.

About 1861, *First day:* John Wilkinson, Little Strickland, 1st; John Salkeld, Melmerby, 2nd. *Second day:* Thomas Threlkeld, Langwathby, 1st; Isaac Dodd, Langwathby Mill, 2nd.

1862, *First day*: William Jameson, Penrith, 1st; T. Salkeld, Great Salkeld, 2nd. *Second day:* J. Brunskill, Penrith, 1st; W. Watson, Winskill, 2nd.

About 1863, William Jameson, Penrith.

„ 1864, *First day:* John Wilkinson, Little Strickland, 1st; John Atkinson, Little Salkeld, 2nd. *Second day:* Isaac Lowthian, Plumpton, 1st; Philip Lowthian, Plumpton, 2nd.

About 1865, *First day:* Isaac Lowthian, Plumpton, 1st; Thomas Sisson, Temple Sowerby, 2nd.

Second day: John Howe, Ousby, 1st; William Cheesebrough, Langwathby Hall, 2nd.

About 1866, *First day:* Andrew Armstrong, Plumpton, 1st; Isaac Lowthian, Plumpton, 2nd. *Second day:* Adam Slack, Skirwith Hall, 1st; James Errington, Aiketgate, 2nd.

1867, *First day:* Adam Slack, Skirwith Hall, 1st; John Cheesebrough, Langwathby Hall, 2nd. *Second day:* George Steadman, Drybeck, 1st; Ralph Pooley, Longlands, 2nd.

About 1868, *First day:* Ralph Pooley, Longlands, 1st; William Cheesebrough, Langwathby, 2nd. *Second day:* Ralph Pooley, 1st; John Cheesebrough, Langwathby, 2nd.

Nine-and-a-half stone prize: Joseph Hodgson, Langwathby, 1st; John Errington, Aiketgate, 2nd.

1869, *First day:* Joseph Hodgson, 1st; William Cheesebrough, 2nd. *Second day:* Saunders Gedling, 1st; William Cheesebrough, 2nd.

Ten stone prize: Robert Mc.Crone, 1st; Thomas Holmes, 2nd.

1870, George Steadman, Drybeck, 1st; William Pigg, Sceugh Dyke, 2nd.

Ten stone prize: Samuel Brownrigg, Clifton, 1st; Robert Gordon, Plumpton, 2nd.

This was the last Round held at Langwathby. There was only one day's sports.

JAMES FAWCETT

OF NENTHEAD.

THE following brief memoir of JAMES FAWCETT of Nenthead—one of the most accomplished wrestlers on record—will carry the reader back to a byegone period, when wrestling and various other amusements, which filled up the day's programme, were far more a *rural* following than at present; when "Rounds" like Melmerby and Langwathby, when West Cumberland "Bridewains," when country meetings like Stone Carr, near Greystoke, produced at stated periods an exciting animation in almost all northern villages, and afforded a brief holiday to a numerous body of small "statesmen" and farmers, their sons, and servants. Such gatherings are now, however, nearly all given up—are only "lang syne" remembrances, and wrestling meetings are held mostly in the large towns, and considerable sums offered to contend for. In many cases they

are got up by innkeepers, who depend on "gate money" to recoup the outlay. Whether this change conduces to fair, manly, unbought wrestling, is a matter of grave doubt. Wrestlings, we are afraid, will never again be contests, like those of ancient Greece and Rome—*for honour and fame.* We cannot look on this change otherwise than as unfortunate for the rural population of the northern counties, who may justly asseverate—

There never was a game like the old English game,
That's played 'twixt the knee and the tee;
You may roam the world o'er, but the game at your door
Is the very best game you will see.

We regret being unable to furnish anything like a detailed account of Jemmy Fawcett's feats in the ring, or more than a meagre outline of the general particulars of his life. But what we do know of his career is so important in wrestling annals, that we are inclined to believe it would be considered injudicious to omit all notice of such a high class athlete. Most of his achievements have become well nigh traditionary, and yet, in many respects, his memory is as green as ever it was in the northern counties, and particularly so in a wide circuit round Alston Moor.

Fawcett lived at Greengill, Nenthead, a mining village in East Cumberland, four or five miles from Alston town, where he worked at his daily occupation, in what is called a "hush," connected with the mines. His height was five feet seven inches,

and his general wrestling weight from ten to ten and a half stone. His modes of attack and defence, and manner of disposing of his opponents, seem to have been innumerable; in fact, he appears to have been an adept in turning the most unlikely emergencies to account. He was as active as an eel, could twist and wriggle like one, and was nearly as difficult to hold. When an opening presented itself, he was partial to getting his left side into play, and then immediately ensued a decisive onslaught. Robert Rowantree, a big six foot, fifteen-stone man, who practised a slaughtering cross-buttock, used to say that no man could so effectually stop it as Jemmy Fawcett. Litt designates him, as "the very best wrestler of his weight Cumberland, or indeed the United Kingdom, ever produced." And again, "Jemmy must have been the most wonderful wrestler of his own or any other time."

It was about the beginning of the present century that Fawcett attained his prime. His wonderful success in carrying off the head prize at the Melmerby "Rounds" for seven consecutive years, added considerable celebrity to his other achievements. On one of these occasions, he went to Melmerby in company with his friend, John Woodmas of Alston, with a full determination of winning. A great stumbling block in the way to victory, presented itself in the person of one "Pakin" Whitfield, who weighed from sixteen to seventeen stones, and who had the reputation of being, at that time, the strongest man in

Cumberland. All went well and smoothly through several rounds, until Fawcett and Wóodmas were drawn together. What was to be done? Woodmas, who weighed at least three stone heavier, argued thus: "Noo, Jemmy, my man, what! thoo can deā nowte wid greit Pakin. Thoo's niver fit to mannish him. Thoo'll just hev to lig doon to me!" "Nay, nay," was the determined reply, "I'll lig nin doon to thee, ner neàbody else. I can throw him weel eneùf, I know I can." When "Pakin" and Fawcett came together in the next round, Woodmas used to say afterwards: "Sist'e! I fair trimmelt ageàn for t' lile fellow. I thowt nowt but t' varra life wad be crush't oot on him!" Standing side by side in the ring, the contrast appeared so great, that it looked as if the struggle was to take place between a giant and a pigmy. When the little man tried to span the back of the big man, and failed to do so, derisive peals of laughter broke out in various parts of the ring; and when the novel spectacle was presented of the little one lengthening his reach by the aid of a pocket handkerchief, the risible propensities of the spectators were tickled to a still greater extent. Getting fairly into holds, the tussle, however, was not one of long duration. "Pakin" commenced operations by making two or three futile attempts to draw Fawcett up, so that he could hold him more firmly; but the latter being fully prepared for any emergency, skipped about nimbly, and evaded all the attempts made to grip

him; then he suddenly slipped under the big-one's chest with his left side, "gat in amang his legs, an' browte him neck ower heels." No sooner was the immense mass of humanity rolled out on the green sward, than the crowd went wild with excitement, and "varra nar split Crossfell wid shootin' an' hurrain'!"

The annual Easter sports, held at Lowbyre, Alston, continued for many years to be a centre for wrestlers to congregate, from the districts round Weardale, Harewood, Knarsdale, Nenthead, and Garrigill. To one of these meetings, came Cuthbert Peart from Weardale, a powerful well built man, weighing sixteen stones nine pounds. Being drawn against Fawcett in one of the rounds, Peart lifted him like a child, and while holding him dangling in the air, asked, in a swaggering manner, where he would like to be laid. Jemmy, however, "mannish't to bit on his feet, like a cat;" and then, quick as lightning, down went the Weardale man, like a shot, from the effects of one of Jemmy's deadliest chips. "Noo," said Fawcett, with mock gravity, while stooping over the prostrate figure of Peart, "thoo can lig me whoariver thoo likes!"

The brilliant manner displayed in carrying off Peart, filled the fallen man with so much wonder and amazement, that he declared Fawcett to be the cleverest wrestler in Britain, and forthwith took him over to Blanchland, on the borders of Northumberland and Durham. At that place he wrestled a

match, with a sixteen-and-a-half-stone man, for a pair of leather breeches, and won easily. On this occasion he had again to resort to the use of a handkerchief.

Another fall, similar in some respects to the one with Peart, occurred at Nentberry sports, about three miles from Alston, with one Thomas Stephenson, a man of considerable stature and bulk, who was accounted a good wrestler in his day and generation. On going into the ring for the final fall, Stephenson repeated again and again, with much confidence: "The little man *must* go down—the little man *must* go down, this time!" When hold had been obtained, the big one led off very briskly with the swing, but failing signally, Fawcett at once introduced the buttock, and brought him over so quickly and effectually, that as soon as Stephenson had recovered from his surprise, he burst out into passionate language, exclaiming: "Jemmy Fawcett's nūt a man, at aw! He's a *divel*—a fair DIVEL! an' neàbody 'ill convince me to th' contrary!"

Jemmy continued to wrestle occasionally till he was nearly fifty years old. Litt speaks of him figuring at Smaledale in Yorkshire, where he resided about 1823.

During a lengthened career, Fawcett continued a great enthusiast in wrestling matters. When lying on his death bed, while wrestling with a foe sure to triumph in the end, the "ruling passion" exercised

a strange influence over him. He actually induced his son and daughter to take hold in the room, for a tussle, in order that the son might be benefitted by his instructions, relative to certain favourite chips. This anecdote is well authenticated.

Fawcett died at Nenthall, near Alston, aged fifty-five or fifty-six years, about 1830.

WILLIAM RICHARDSON

OF CALDBECK.

"*BELTED WILL.*"

When Professor Wilson wrote a review of William Litt's popular "Wrestliana," for *Blackwood's Magazine*, he stated that William Richardson of Caldbeck, the winner of two hundred and forty wrestling trophies or "belts," was "better entitled than old Howard of Castle Dacre himself to the cognomen of 'Belted Will.'" From this sweeping dictum of the presiding spirit of old Maga, we are inclined to dissent. William Richardson doubtless gained his formidable list of prize "belts" mostly in well contested but harmless fields of strife, and is fully entitled to the proud distinction of having his familiar Caldbeck patronymic, "Will Ritson," elevated into "Belted Will." How, however, he is "better entitled" than the grand border chieftain of the Howards—one of the most celebrated heroes that shone in the long and deadly feuds which prevailed for generations between the rival border houses of Scotland and England—we are at a loss

to conceive. Besides, they earned a similar designation in such different fields. One is rendered for ever famous as one of the most renowned actors in the fierce border raids that were wont to arise between England and Scotland—a historic celebrity handed down to all time; and whose sword and belt—still preserved amongst the Howard relics—astonish everyone attempting to handle them. It is inconceivable that any one ever existed with sufficient strength to wield such formidable weapons, without we fall back to that giant of a "long time ago," yclept Samson, or to the other strong man of heathen mythology, Hercules. Richardson, holding a high place in the wrestling arenas of the north, and formidable from his overpowering strength, contended only in fields where, it is true, there was keen determined rivalry, but of an entirely harmless description to life or limb—plenty brought to grass in a rough, tumble-down, unwelcome manner, but not ending with the death-struggles of infuriate moss-troopers, hating each other with a savage bitterness almost inconceivable at the present day.

William Richardson was born at Haltcliff, in Caldbeck parish, in March, 1780. In the rural districts of Cumberland, families were frequently numerous. The Richardsons were of this description—the subject of our present memoir being the eldest but one of thirteen children. In his own neighbourhood, indeed almost throughout Cumberland, he became familiarly known as "Ritson," or

"Rutson." In order to make his way in the world, he was brought up to the occupation of a joiner, and continued to follow the business for some years; but having a strong inclination for farming, and breeding Herdwick sheep, he gave it up, and settled on an estate called Netherrow, near Caldbeck. This farm was in the occupation of his father and himself for eighty years.

Richardson measured in height, five feet nine-and-a-half inches, and weighed fully fourteen stones. He was a man well and strongly built from "top to toe;" slightly round shouldered and round backed; with a fine, broad, expansive chest; possessing tremendous strength of arm; and had a "neck like a bull." He lived till February, 1860, having attained his eightieth year; and it became a common remark that up to nearly the final shuffling off this mortal coil, he had the lightest foot, and was the "lishest" walker of any old man in the neighbourhood of Caldbeck. At Faulds Brow sports, when a hale hearty stager of more than three-score-and-ten years, he challenged to wrestle any man in England of his own age. We once witnessed, too, at Newcastle, in 1861, another septuagenarian, named Thomas Fawcett, from the neighbourhood of Kendal, challenge any man in England or Scotland of a like age. He stood six feet one inch, appeared uncommonly active, and straight as a maypole. Real "grit" these, our transatlantic cousins would say. Yes, it is such

men that make Cumberland and Westmorland athletes superior to all the world.

The hype became Richardson's main chip; and a favourite method of stopping an opponent—at which he was allowed to be a great adept—was to give him a sudden click—"kind o' bear him off his feet"—and then lift and hype. If an opponent should attempt buttocking, his unrivalled strength of arm enabled him to gather his adversary up with a vice-like grip, anything but pleasant. Indeed, he never was buttocked but once, in the whole of a long career, and that once by John Nicholson of Threlkeld, in private practice one summer night in the neighbourhood of Ouse-bridge.

"Will" scored his first prize when only eighteen years old, at Soukerry, in his native parish. The sports held there annually ranked amongst the oldest and best local gatherings in Cumberland, and being in the midst of a good wrestling country, several noted men attended yearly. From the manner in which the youngster disposed of all comers, he was pronounced to be a promising "colt" for future work. After gaining this, his first victorious effort, in a strong entry, Richardson wrestled with marked success through many rings —of course, like others, getting a "topple over" now and then. When about twenty-one years old, he entered into the spirit of the sport with wonderful enthusiasm, and determination not to be beaten. Two remarkable circumstances, in a prolonged

career, are worth relating. He was never "felled" a single fall, by any mortal man, between the age of twenty-one and twenty-eight; that is to say, from 1801 to 1808 or 1809, during which period he attended almost all the sports held between Calder-bridge on the south-west, Pooley-bridge on the east, and all through the north to the Scottish borders. And he was never "felled" two falls together but once in his life, when a mere stripling, at Harrop sports, between Embleton and Lorton. Job Tinnian of Holme Cultram (one of a distinguished wrestling and fighting family, a good striker, and proficient with the buttock), and Richardson, were matched for a guinea, the best of three falls. Job got the two last, and his opponent the first. Tinnian—who measured six feet six inches in height—doffed his shirt, and had his back so thoroughly soaped, there was no holding him. Previous to the match, Richardson had thrown him for the head prize at the sports, and then again next day at a "Bridewain" at Southwaite, about two miles from Cockermouth, on the Lorton road. Job Tinnian had a daughter, who, we believe, grew to be such a giantess, that she was taken about as a show, and exhibited in the Blue Bell at Carlisle, and various other places.

During the latter part of the last century, and in the early part of the present one, the head prizes at the various wrestling meetings were of a most primitive description, consisting either of a homely

leather "belt"—with an inscription, giving name of place, date, and name of winner—or a "brutches piece," a suitable length of buckskin or broadcloth, for making a pair of breeches; and occasionally, but very rarely, a silver cup. Unlike the present day, liberal money prizes did not tempt competitors on the village greens.

While the century was still young, some enterprising individual announced that a "golden guinea" —the first ever given in Cumberland for a like purpose—would be presented to the winner of the head prize at Highmoor sports, near Wigton. The offering of such a gilded bait—quite a novelty—naturally drew together a strong field of active young athletes. William Richardson of Caldbeck, among the rest, put in an appearance. Much resolute wrestling occurred, as round after round passed over. When the ranks became thinner and thinner, the two last standers proved to be one Todd, a spirit merchant from Wigton, and Richardson. The former was familiarly spoken of in the neighbourhood as "Brandy Todd." He was a powerful built man, nearly six feet high, and a great enthusiast in wrestling, pedestrianism, and dog-trailing. The two men should have been matched on several previous occasions, and this being the first, indeed, the only time they ever met in any ring, the excitement became intense. The Wigtonians being in great numbers, "crowed very crouse." Some of the more boisterous ones tried

to banter and upset the self-possession of Richardson, by shouting in derision—"Browte up wid poddish an' kurn milk! what can *thoo* deu, I wad like to know? Go bon! Brandy 'ill fling thee oot o' t' ring, like a bag o' caff!" The men stood up ready for action. Holds were obtained, after some delay in fencing; a brief struggle ensued, and the huge spirit-merchant measured his full length on the green-sward. His friends were dumb-foundered at the sudden fall of their hero. The opposite party, highly elated, cried out, much to the discomfiture of poor Todd—"Ha! ha! Codbeck kurn't milk's strănger ner Wigton brandy—efter aw t' rattle!"

When Richardson was in his prime, sports or races were held at the Beehive Inn, Deanscale, near Lamplugh. One Shepherd Pearson, from about Wythop, made a curious and, to look at the terms, foolish wager. He bet a ten pound note that he would find a man to win the wrestling; another to win the foot-race; and a hound to win the dog-trail, at the Beehive sports. Now, it is well known how very much odds increase on a double event, but here are evens to win *three* events. Exceedingly foolish! but nevertheless the bet was won. The chosen champion proved to be Richardson for the wrestling; John Todhunter of Mungrisdale, near Threlkeld, for the foot race; and "Towler," belonging to John Harrison of Caldbeck, for the dog-trail. Curiously enough, all three

nominations succeeded in winning the head prize in their respective entries; and Pearson carried off his risky wager with a triumphant flourish.

A feud of long standing, it appears, had existed between William Litt and Richardson. This feud no doubt gave a colour to various statements, and places us on rather delicate ground in endeavouring to do justice to both parties. Our object, however, is to speak of each man truthfully and impartially—to let neither colour "the even tenor of our way." The couple had met at several sports in West Cumberland; and on one occasion, when drawn together, Richardson had succeeded in disposing of Litt. The latter, however, was, as he termed it, in his "novitiate." No doubt the fall was highly unpalatable to the loser, and at length resulted in a challenge being given and accepted. The meeting ended unsatisfactorily. Both men drew up to their posts at the appointed time, Litt shewing unmistakeable signs of being "fresh i' drink." When requested to make ready for the contest, he gave a point blank refusal, saying he "wad nowder strip nor russell!" Here was an awkward fix! What was to be done? After a considerable amount of "higgling" had been gone through, another match was made, for ten pounds a side, to come off at the Green Dragon, Workington—Litt being backed by his brother, a medical man of good standing. On the appointed day, Richardson and his friends were on the ground to the minute. For some reason or

other, Litt did not put in an appearance. His brother—the doctor—went into the ring, and held his watch till the full time specified in the agreement had expired, and then very honourably handed the money over to Richardson, saying: "I can give no reason why my brother has not fulfilled the conditions of his engagement." In after years, when the bitterness of old feuds was nearly, if not altogether worn out, Litt expressed regret that he had treated Richardson's merits as a wrestler somewhat scurvily in *Wrestliana.*

Rowland Long of Ambleside, an immense big, burly man, the winner, it was asserted, of nearly one hundred belts, issued a challenge, that he was open to wrestle any man in England. An enthusiastic Cumbrian, named Thomas Bell, residing at Goose Well, near Threlkeld, took up the challenge, not for himself, but with the understanding that he should produce a man at the appointed time and place. He first tried his neighbour, Tom Nicholson, but Tom "thowt hissel rayder ower slender" to engage such a giant as Rowland, and recommended William Richardson of Caldbeck. Bell set off, and after some trouble and delay, fell in with Richardson at Rosley Hill fair, on Whit-Monday. Without much ado the two agreed; got a conveyance, and drove off for Ambleside without further preparation: a long course of training never being thought of in those good old days. After reaching Ambleside, they took a boat, and rowed down to Bowness,

where sports were held on the Tuesday. Richardson's name was entered for the wrestling, but being stiff and tired with the long ride from Rosley, he didn't, according to his own version of the affair, "git weel away wid his men." He succeeded, however, in working upwards till the final fall, and then encountered John Long, a brother of Rowland's. The two had a hard struggle for the prize, but in the end the Caldbeck hero proved victorious. Whether John Long considered the fall doubtful or unsatisfactory, cannot now be ascertained; but he said, tauntingly, to Richardson, after the tussle was over, "If thoo can du nowte neā better ner that, my man, thoo'll hev d—d lile chance wi' oor Roan, I can tell thee!"

On Wednesday—the day following—the match with Rowland was appointed to come off on the bowling green of the Salutation Hotel, Ambleside, for, we believe, ten guineas a side, the best of three falls. Richardson, looking from a window of the hotel, got a first sight of his huge opponent, coming up the street. After an attentive survey, and noticing the awkward, heavy sort of rolling walk that Long had, a smile stole over the features of the Caldbeck man, who thought then he could win easily; setting it down in his own mind, that one so slow and ungainly would not be quick enough in his movements in the wrestling ring. This mental calculation proved correct; the two first falls settling

the match, and enabling the winner to walk away with the amount contended for.

The two Cumbrians left Ambleside on Thursday, and drove back to Threlkeld. Wrestling and other sports were being held there the same day. The victor in the match of the previous day was greeted with hearty cheers, by a crowd collected on the village green. A score or more of clamorous voices were raised in pressing entreaties that he would enter his name for the wrestling. Tired with the three previous days' exertions, "an' nūt feelin' hofe reet, wi' gittin' sups o' drink of aw maks," he didn't want to take any part in the proceedings. He was, however, very reluctantly persuaded to enter the ring, but "niver stripp'd nor doff'd a thing off," Notwithstanding these drawbacks, he again proved victorious, throwing in the course of the day, both Tom Nicholson and his brother John. On Friday—the following day—he won at Soukerry, in Caldbeck parish; and on Saturday gained the head prize at Hutton Roof, near Penrith; thus finishing a heavy week's work, by winning at four different places, and gaining an important match besides.

On Ascension Day, at Kingmoor Races, Carlisle, in 1809, the subscription belt was won by William Richardson of Caldbeck; and the Mayor's belt by Joseph Stalker of Welton. At the first annual meeting on the Swifts, Carlisle, where there was a purse of five guineas to contend for, Richardson

was thrown, in the third round, by John Harrison of New Church, who wrestled second to Tom Nicholson. In the same year, at Penrith, in October, the three favourites were Tom Nicholson, William Richardson, and Harrison of New Church. All three champions went down; Richardson, after throwing John Oliphant, James Lancaster, and Joseph Brownrigg, was thrown in the fourth round by John Nicholson of Threlkeld.

At Carlisle in 1810—Tom Nicholson's second year of winning—Richardson got capsized by a person of no note whatever; but succeeded in winning the second day's prize, Joseph Slack of Blencow being second. At Carlisle, in 1812, the head prize was won by James Scott, Oarnlee, Canonbie, throwing in the final fall William Richardson. On the following day, the loser in the wrestle up proved victorious, throwing finally John Forster of Walton Rigg; William Mackereth of Cockermouth being third. The winner received four guineas, and the second two guineas. At Penrith, in October of the same year, ten guineas—a large sum to wrestle for in those days—was given to contend for, where Richardson was thrown by John Parker of Sparkgate, the winner.

At Carlisle, in 1813, for the chief prize, the Caldbeck favourite threw William Waters, John Cowen, Walter Phillips, and Samuel Jameson of Penrith; and was thrown in the final fall by Robert Rowantree of Bewcastle, after one of the severest

struggles on record. Richardson's own account of the fall was this: after having lifted Rowantree to hype him, his foot slipped, owing to the wetness of the day, and consequent slipperiness of the ground; losing his balance, he fell clean backwards, thus throwing away the fall. He had met Rowantree on two or three previous occasions, and always threw him. At Keswick, in 1820, the Caldbeck champion was thrown by William Wilson of Ambleside, said by a high authority to be the best man Westmorland ever produced.

On the revival of the Carlisle wrestling in 1821, after three years' cessation, Richardson, then forty-one years old, drove to the meeting in a conveyance with Tom "Dyer" and others. On leaving home he had no thoughts whatever of wrestling—"ower oald"—and withstood all the persuasions of his friends, till reaching Durdar village, where he consented once more to try. He wore at the time, a pair of old-fashioned knee-breeches, which held him too tight to wrestle in, and had therefore to borrow an easier pair before entering the ring. The gathering was an immense one. The numbers assembled on the Swifts were estimated at twenty thousand. A long array of highly respectable ladies, including the Countess of Lonsdale, were interested spectators. Sixty-four men entered, and nearly all were calculated to weigh fourteen stones or upwards. In the morning, when the Caldbeck party were at Durdar, Tom "Dyer"—one of the very best hypers

of his time, indeed, a first-class man altogether —was very full of winning. The first man called into the ring, and the first that went down, proved to be Tom, being thrown by one John Hetherington.

It is very probable there never met on the Swifts as good a field of wrestlers. Richardson acknowledged afterwards that he stood most in awe of Joseph Robley of Scarrowmannick, from the exceeding clever manner in which he swung his opponents. Robley, by the way, has been credited with being the first introducer of the *swinging hype.* They met in the third round, and the Caldbeck veteran succeeded in disposing of the one he looked upon as his greatest bugbear. The third round also proved fatal to several other good wrestlers—Jonathan Watson, James Graham, and Joseph Abbot going down. Weightman—then twenty-two years old, all bone and muscle, standing six feet three inches high, and weighing fifteen-and-a-half stones—fell in the fourth round. Glendinning, (a rough tearing hand, from the neighbourhood of Penrith, compared to whom a bull in a china shop was as nothing,) fell in the fifth round; leaving Ford of Ravenglass—victor over Weightman at Egremont, weighing over fifteen stones, and measuring six feet two inches—for the final fall with Richardson. The latter succeeded in throwing the young, formidable West Cumbrian, and carried off the head prize amid much shouting and cheering.

Richardson won the chief prize at Faulds Brow,

near Caldbeck—where annually some of the best wrestling in Cumberland could be witnessed—for *nineteen* years in succession, a continued series of successes unequalled in wrestling annals. Flushed with victory crowning victory, he went with the full determination of carrying off the prize for the twentieth time, if possible, but the spell was broken: fate had ordained otherwise. A raw-boned rustic, unknown to fame, named Young, (afterwards a publican at Dalston,) sealed his fate. The stewards were inclined to bring the fall in a "snap," but the vanquished man very honourably declared himself to be fairly thrown. Nevertheless, he was so chagrined at the untoward event, so grievously disappointed at not having achieved this highly prized distinction, that it was asserted he fairly cried for vexation over it.

The wrestling at Faulds Brow always—very injudiciously, we think—took place late in the evening. On the occasion of "Belted Will's" final discomfiture, it was not concluded till two or three o'clock, in the cold grey atmosphere of a July morning, many rounds being finished up by the aid of lighted candles.

The following reply to a novel wrestling challenge, which appeared in the columns of a Whitehaven newspaper, explains itself without note or comment. It is dated October 16th, 1843, and, we believe, it proved to be the end of the matter:—

SIR,—A paragraph lately appeared in the *Whitehaven Herald*, stating that Charles Lowdon, of wrestling notoriety, who resides near Keswick, and is sixty years of age, would wrestle a match with any individual of the same age. The veteran William Richardson of Caldbeck, aged sixty-two years, will be happy to accept the challenge, and wrestle Mr. Lowdon, the best of five falls, for £5 or £10 a side. The friends of W. R. will be happy to meet the friends of his rival, at the house of Joseph Ray, of the Royal Oak inn, Cockermouth, on or before the 30th instant, to make the match, and to settle the other preliminaries usual on such occasions.—I am, Sir, yours, &c.—J. M.

During the last forty years of Richardson's life, he became noted as a good farmer on the Netherrow estate; and was remarkably successful in the breeding and rearing of Herdwick sheep, a class of animals peculiarly adapted to the mountainous districts of Cumberland and Westmorland, which are likewise held in high repute for the excellence of their mutton. He obtained many local prizes for different classes of fell sheep; and attended the tup fair at Keswick regularly; but though enthusiastic about his Herdwicks, his conversation, it is said, had at all times a tendency to "bristle o'er" with feats in the wrestling ring. A tale is told of him which illustrates this tendency. Arriving at Keswick, according to annual custom, to exhibit and sell tups, he happened to meet an old crony whom he had not seen for years. The two sat down, "cheek by jowl," and soon became absorbed in an animated conversation, in which "nowte but russlers an' russlin' was h'ard, amang aw t' chang;

an' t' tips was niver yance thowt on, till t' fair was varra nar ower, an' theer was hardly sec a thing as a buyer to be fund."

Richardson could be either a good friend or a good hater, as circumstances might call forth. One illustration of his kindly feeling and warmth of heart towards a struggling neighbour, may be mentioned. An industrious man, named Jeffreys—a blacksmith at the Caldbeck lead-mines—either occupied a field of lea grass, or had cut a few carts of peats, high up the fell-side. During a dreary wet season, when everything was spoiling, Richardson volunteered the use of a horse and cart to assist in clearing the field on the first fine day. From some unforeseen cause the horse took fright, galloped down the mountain brow, and either broke its leg by falling, or else was unfortunately killed. The accident placed the poor blacksmith in an awkward position, especially as the horse was a valuable one, estimated at that time to be worth thirty or forty guineas. He offered, however, to pay what money he had, and clear off the rest by instalments. "Nay, nay," said Richardson, "it was as pure an accident as iver yan h'ard tell on, an' med ha' happen't to anybody. I'll tak nowte frae thee—nūt a fardin'!"

A fell-side rhymer, named Richard Nicholson, of Caldbeck, has done his best to embalm Richardson's memory in verse, something after the following fashion :—

"When youth bloom't on him, few were as grand;
His fame was spread through aw the land,
Wid active russlin' an' strang reet hand.
At Faulds Brow reaces, 'twas his profession
To run when young withoot intermission,
And prizes nineteen he won in succession!

The shipperds aroond med weel dred his name;
For Herdwick tips oft the prize he'd claim,
Till far an' wide was spread his fame,
As ye may read:
But noo i' the dust lies his noble frame:
Will Ritson's deid!"

WILLIAM LITT

OF BOWTHORN.

THE name prefixed to our present biographical notice, is that of a gentleman who, by his writings and conduct in the ring, has conferred greater lustre on, and added greater distinction to the "back-hold" wrestling of Cumberland and Westmorland, than any other individual. His historical account of ancient and modern wrestling—Litt's *Wrestliana* —was considered, in 1823, when *Blackwood's Magazine* was at the summit of its fame, worthy of a highly eulogistic notice from the pen of Christopher North. Litt's wrestling notices and anecdotes have reference to the existence of the noble pastime, and a record of its most famed heroes and their contests, from 1770, and for the fifty years following.

Before this period, the names and places of abode; the various and noteworthy achievements; the distinctive excellencies of celebrated wrestlers; and the places where their triumphant contests occurred, were little known beyond their immediate locality; and the meagre information to be gathered —not invariably to be relied on—had been handed

down, and circulated mostly as village gossip, or been derived from the tales of some one whose knowledge rested on hearsay, and not from actual observation. This arose in a great measure in consequence of the slight intercourse that existed, eighty or a hundred years ago, between places only fifty or sixty miles apart. At present—thanks to William Litt's research and literary labours—all the great contests from 1780 to 1822, are familiar to us, and can be resorted to, for furnishing those who take a delight in the manly pastime of our forefathers, with a perfectly reliable description of its heroes, and their several peculiar excellencies.

The individual actors, too, in those great contests, have become familiar to all who take an interest in the northern wrestling ring. We are introduced, not alone to the name and doings of Tom Nicholson, and a host of remarkable wrestlers, his contemporaries, and the surprising manner in which they could, with consummate dexterity, grass an opponent; but we have graphic descriptions of many who, at an earlier period, became entitled to the distinction of champions, in many a hard contested ring—in rings where pecuniary prizes were rarely given, and if given at all, trifling in amount. The great incentives to successful competition were honour and fame, typified by a gilded leather belt, of no greater intrinsic value than the laurel crown of the ancient Greeks. Sometimes—

on very particular and rare occasions—there was offered for the final victor a silver cup.

From Litt's description, we are familiar with the best and most renowned men, whose stars were in the ascendant, from 1780 to 1820. From Adam Dodd, "the cock of the north," a prime favourite, possessing all the requisites that go to the formation of a first class wrestler; from the Rev. Abraham Brown, a clergyman at Egremont, and previously a Bampton scholar, to Tom Nicholson of Threlkeld, another prime favourite, whose scientific wrestling acquirements, and wonderful success in the ring, were patent to Litt from frequent observation. The above Abraham Brown—better known in his day and neighbourhood as "Parson Brown"—is the self-same individual that a well known "Professor of Moral Philosophy" designated, "the most celebrated wrestler that the north, perhaps, ever produced." This gentlemen had no objection to show his friends, or even a stranger, how easy it was for a parson to upset a layman. The professor cannot find the least fault for thus indulging in a friendly fall, and stigmatizes his detractors for so doing, as "prim mouthed Puritans," who may "purfle up their potato traps," and hold their tongues till the arms of the athlete are encased in lawn sleeves, and he becomes a—"Bishop."

Our readers, or a majority of them at least, are doubtless aware, from witnessing the brilliant falls resulting from a vigorously put in "buttock,"

that it is one of the most showy and effective chips that wrestlers bring into play. Nothing finer than one of those dashing somersaults, that were wont to electrify the opponents of James Little or John Ivison. To the Bampton scholar—Abraham Brown—before settling for life at Egremont, a remote West Cumberland market town, is due the credit of inventing and bringing "buttocking" into use. The two men, Adam Dodd and Abraham Brown, were certainly worthy representatives of the very best class of wrestlers in the "olden times." They were close upon six feet high, and fifteen stones weight; were especial favourites of the public, as well as the historian of early wrestling. Both were straight standers, ready at taking hold, good with either leg, and at work as quickly as possible, following up the first attack with such rapidity, that their opponents had but small chance of avoiding a final and fatal stroke.

After all this deserved praise, however, we cannot class them much, if any, superior to William Litt; and if Adam Dodd was justly styled "Cock of the North," the other is almost equally deserving of being hailed "Star of the North." In all their contests, there is nothing to shock the most fastidious moralist; nothing to outrage the feelings of the most humane; nothing that the most delicate-minded need blush at. Unlike the scenes of violence and fearful punishment depicted in the records of the pugilistic ring—now all but abolished

—they can be dwelt upon without any degrading associations. Compare the description in *Wrestliana*, of the fight between Carter and Oliver at Gretna Green—the head of the latter, in the fourth round, "terrifically hideous"—and the author's eleven bouts with Harry Graham, on Arlecdon Moor, and the reader will not find anything approaching to cruelty in one, while the other is indeed "hideous."

WILLIAM LITT, the author of *Wrestliana*, was born at Bowthorn, near Whitehaven, in November, 1785. His parents held a highly respectable position in society, and he received a liberal education, with the object of fitting him for a clergyman in the Church of England. This intention was, however, given up, in consequence of a manifest tendency to out-door sports, and a "loose" sort of life. The parents seeing that young Litt had rendered himself in some measure unfit for the Church, placed him with a neighbouring farmer to get an insight into practical, as well as theoretical, agricultural pursuits. On arriving at manhood, with a vacillation much regretted in after life, farming was neglected and abandoned.

Christopher North, in old "Maga," says, "Mr. Litt is a person in a very respectable rank of life, and his character has, we know, been always consistent with his condition. He is in the best sense of the word a gentleman," was an "honest, upright, independent Englishman. We remember

Mr. Litt most distinctly: a tall, straight, handsome, respectable, mild-looking, well dressed man. If we mistake not, he wrestled in top-boots, a fashion we cannot approve of." Top-boots to contend in on the Swifts, at Carlisle, at the present day, when wrestlers make it a study to don a costume that gives the greatest facility to freedom of motion, both in the limbs and body, would undoubtedly be considered by the whole ring, a strange spectacle, and subject the wearer to no end of chaff.

We will now proceed to give a few incidents that will establish Litt's undeniable claims to superiority in the wrestling ring. We are not aware that he ever contended in the Carlisle ring but twice—in the year 1811, and again a few years after that date, on both of which occasions he was unsuccessful. His appearance in 1811, was a foolish act, for according to his own statement, he had been unwell for some time—in fact, out of form for wrestling. After a keenly contested bout, Joseph Bird, a well known wrestler from Holm Wrangle, succeeded in throwing him. The same year a match—the best of eleven falls—was entered into with Harry Graham of Brigham, and arranged to come off, on Arlecdon Moor, for sixty guineas—at that time a larger sum than had ever been contended for in any wrestling ring. From the celebrity of the parties, too, and the great amount of the stake, the match created a greater interest in the wrestling world than any hitherto contested.

Harry was considered one of the most active men that ever entered a ring; indeed, a first rate man in every respect, the favourite and pet of a large district. He had contested many matches with the best men going; one of which was with the celebrated Tom Nicholson, in which he gained five falls for the Threlkeld champion three.

When Litt and Harry appeared in the ring, the former was desirous to postpone the contest, on account of ill health; but the Brighamites, with an absence of that good feeling generally displayed by wrestlers one to another, refused, and insisted that the match should go on then and there. Harry gained the three first falls, which so elated himself and friends, that they looked on the final issue as a foregone conclusion, and indulged in some unseemly chaff. The defeat, however, served to rouse the energies—the courage and resolution of the loser, and he easily gained seven out of the next eight falls. John Fidler of Wythop Hall defeated Harry at Cockermouth, and afterwards at Arlecdon. Litt threw them both, and had the year before, when in good health, thrown Harry with the greatest ease. These repeated defeats of a man who could dispose of such as Tom Nicholson, William Richardson, and others, will go far to establish our favourable opinion of the wrestling historian. Other, and as strongly conclusive, testimony, is at hand to be produced. John Lowden, from the neighbourhood of Keswick, who had thrown several of the

cleverest wrestlers of his day—winner of a silver cup at Carlisle—was obliged to succumb to Litt.

Many of our wrestling readers will have heard of the "public bridals," at Lorton, where some of the best wrestling in the county might be seen. One hundred and twenty names were entered in 1807. For the final fall, William Armstrong of Tallentire, an excellent wrestler, and winner the year before, contended with Litt, and sustained defeat. At the revival of Blake Fell races in 1808, there were two good entries, and Litt carried off first prize on both the first and second day, notwithstanding being drawn against all the best men, including the two Tinians, and other well known names.

We have now to notice a series of consecutive successes, to which we believe there are few parallels in wrestling annals. In the early part of this century, the best meetings in West Cumberland took place on Arlecdon Moor. The meetings were numerously attended, and held two or three times a year. For ten years, from 1805 to 1815, Litt contended for all the prizes—except in 1814, when he omitted to enter his name—and was never thrown. Conceive a man being able to wrestle successfully through a really strong ring upwards of a score of times. After such a noteworthy series of exploits, no further testimony need be adduced —no more satisfactory evidence wanted—to prove William Litt's claim to be ranked among the brightest wrestling stars of the north.

In concluding this notice, we should have been glad to state that his career through the world, in more important respects, had been attended by gratifying results. The truth, however, is that from the time he left the paternal roof, his course through a checkered life to the bitter end, was marked by a series of disastrous failures. Attending wrestling and racing meetings unfits many persons for a steady and attentive devotion to business. This in a marked degree was the case with Litt. Farming duties became neglected, and then given up. Next he embarked in a large brewery at Whitehaven. A collapse, and loss of nearly all the capital employed, followed in little more than twelve months. He then went to reside at Hensingham, finding part employment in some triflingly remunerative parochial offices, expecting daily that he would get an appointment from the ruling powers at Whitehaven.

Disappointed in this expectation, he resolved on emigrating to Canada, in 1832, and retrieve his broken fortunes in taking the cutting of canals, and works of a like description. A break down again occurred, and he tried to gain a living by writing for the Canadian journals. This failing, he became a teacher. Suffering, however, from "home sickness"—a craving often fatal to natives of mountainous regions—his mental as well as bodily powers began failing before attaining his sixtieth year.

"I gaze on the snow clad plain, see the cataract's foam,
And sigh for the hills and dales of my far distant home."

He died at Lachine, near Montreal, in 1847, when sixty-two years old; regret and sorrow at forced banishment from his native "hills and dales," no doubt, hastening decay and the destroyer's final blow.

> "Dearly lov'd scenes of my youth, for ever adieu,
> Like mist on the mountain ye fade from my view,
> Save at night in my dreams."
>
> *The Emigrant.*

ADDENDA.

The following extracts from letters, are quoted from a controversy which sprung up between WILLIAM LITT and some one who signed himself ATHLETICUS, in the columns of the *Carlisle Patriot,* November, 1824:—

Mr. Litt deems me but a "*theorist* in matters appertaining to the ring." His own athletic feats, as detailed in *Wrestliana,* are heroic and numerous, and it would be presumptuous in me to attempt comparison; therefore, compared with Mr. Litt, I must (borrowing a phrase from the ring) consider myself as a *fallen man.* But, notwithstanding the vaunted achievements of the champion of Arlecdon Moor, there are those now living old enough to remember his being thrown in the Carlisle ring by very ordinary wrestlers, when in the zenith of his fame. The village green on a summer's evening or during a holiday, is frequently the scene of many a rustic amusement. And on this arena, when athletic exercises were going on, I have often borne a part—where the old men inspired the young with emulation, by reciting the achievements of their youth—and the applause of the rustic spectators was the only meed of victory. Here, sir, I have seen many

a manly struggle; and though I have never entered a public prize ring, I flatter myself I have gained something more than a theoretical knowledge of athletic science. An ardent temper, and the buoyancy of youthful spirits, no doubt gave considerable zest to the sports, and my memory fondly recalls, and dwells with peculiar delight, on the hours which I have spent amidst happy villagers engaged in these rustic scenes of innocent amusement. I will also venture to assert, that amongst the peasantry assembled on the village green, not only Weightman, Cass, Abbot, Wright, and the Dobsons of Cliburn, but even Mr. Litt himself, imbibed his earliest knowledge of the rudiments of wrestling.

ATHLETICUS.

"Athleticus" says, and thinks he is cutting deep when doing so, "there are those now living old enough to remember my being thrown in the Carlisle ring, by very ordinary wrestlers, when in the zenith of my fame." Now, Mr. Editor, do you not think this is rather a stinging remark, as it relates not to any point of issue between us, and was therefore as uncalled for as unnecessary? · · I never wrestled but twice in the Carlisle ring, and never saw it when "in the zenith of my fame." The first time was in 1811, when, as I have stated elsewhere, I was thrown by Joseph Bird, who was surely no very *ordinary* wrestler. When taking hold, Bird got below my breast, and pinned my right arm close to the elbow, down to my side; and a person, ignorant enough, surely! insisted, that because he found by pulling my left arm over his back, that he could make my fingers meet, I should either take hold or be crossed out. I foolishly chose the first, thinking that I perhaps might better myself after. I was mistaken; though those who are "old enough" to remember the circumstance, may remember likewise that, considering the situation in which I was placed, I was not disposed off easily. · · The other time I entered the Carlisle ring, I met one of the Fosters—no ordinary men—and I can only state that after

our contest, I was ordered by one of the umpires to wrestle the fall over again, and I waited until the end of the round in expectation of doing so, when I found that a bet of half-a-guinea made by the other umpire, (and which I was aware of at the time,) had turned the scale against me. I can, if required, name the umpire, and the person he betted with; which bet, however, he never recovered, and this circumstance deterred me from wrestling the next day, and determined me never to wrestle more at Carlisle. This was in 1815. My best day was in 1806, 1807, and 1808; therefore the assertion of "Athleticus" is doubly incorrect.

WILLIAM LITT.

Mr. Litt admits being thrown in the Carlisle ring by Joseph Bird of Holm Wrangle, in 1811, which he says in *Wrestliana*, was a "smartish contest;" and he adds that his "best day was in 1806, 1807, and 1808." But, sir, this is only three short years past the time when Mr. Litt was in the zenith of his fame; so that even writing from recollection, my assertion is not altogether incorrect, and certainly not intentionally so. Mr. Litt and Joseph Bird had some dispute, it appears, about taking hold: be this as it may, I was justified in stating that Mr. L. had been thrown at Carlisle by *ordinary* wrestlers; for Bird was never considered more than a third-rate player in the Carlisle ring. He was a powerful man enough, though not heavier than Mr. Litt at that day—possessed little or no activity, and scarcely any science as a wrestler. I have no account of the wrestling in 1811 in my possession; but I have an account in 1815, and strange as it may appear, Mr. Litt's name is never mentioned! It would be well, sir, if my opponent would recollect that his statements have to meet the public eye. In the year 1815, Bird, in the first and second rounds, came against Byers and Grisdale, both of whom he threw, and was himself thrown in the third round by Thomas Peat. Though I may admire Mr. Litt's general judgment on athletic sports, I must again doubt it, if he deems any of the

Fosters first-rate wrestlers, or any more in the ring than ordinary men; for in the scale of athletic science, they were not even so exalted as Bird. One of the Fosters fell in the first round, and another in the second; but I shall enter no further into this part of the controversy, as Mr. L's. name appears entirely unconnected with the wrestling of 1815. When I recall to my recollection the feats of agility, science, and pith, displayed by Thomas Nicholson in the Carlisle ring, in carrying off with *eclat*, the first prize for three successive years; and when I also recollect with what facility this athletic hero discomfitted Bird, Mr. Litt's opponent, I very much doubt the truth of the panegyric which Mr. L. passes upon himself in *Wrestliana* for his performance on Arlecdon-moor, wherein he states (though in poor health and condition at the time,) that he defeated Harry Graham, the successful opponent of the once celebrated Thomas Nicholson.

ATHLETICUS.

MILES AND JAMES DIXON

OF GRASMERE.

When Miles and James Dixon, whose doings in the ring we are about to chronicle in a brief memoir, were to the fore, wrestling was a great institution in the Lake District. Patronized and encouraged by Professor Wilson—himself a host in upholding the manly pastime; and afterwards by Captain Aufrere of Bowness, a distinguished and liberal patron; and assisted by many of the resident gentry, it attained deserved eminence in the northern parts of Windermere. In reaching this eminence, the sport was greatly indebted to the active exertions and judicious management of the late Thomas Cloudesdale of the Ferry hotel. Why the once popular pastime should be almost entirely snuffed out round Windermere, is a matter of surmise. The principal reason assigned weighs heavy on the wrestlers themselves: it is no less than glaring collusion, engendered by unprincipled betting men.

For a long time, wrestling in the immediate vicinity of lake Windermere, and the adjacent parts of Westmorland, and North Lancashire, was kept

up and followed more after the amateur fashion than the professional. It was looked on more as a thing to be enjoyed for the real love of the science, than as a means of filling the coffers of speculators. In what may be called its holiday aspect, the sport contrasted favourably with the art as practised in the sister county of Cumberland. The Windermere wrestlers, in thus shaping their courses, probably escaped many snares which those fell into who courted more publicity, and were envious of achieving greater fame. In fact, there were many good scientific men at the palmy period of the lake wrestling rings, who abstained from attending public gatherings almost entirely, and yet were quite as good as those who may be termed professionals.

One instance we can select from many, will suffice to prove this. Jonathan Rodgers won the championship of many local meetings in his own immediate neighbourhood. He was born and brought up at Brotherelkeld, the highest farm in the vale of Eskdale. In his infancy, it was a lonely farm, seldom visited by strangers, but now well known to tourists crossing Hardknot. His forefathers had held the fell farm—a very extensive one, carrying between two and three thousand sheep—for generations. He once got as far as the Flan, and won easily in a strong ring, finally disposing of Joseph Parker of Crooklands, a really good man, supposed to be the coming champion of Westmorland. At another time,

climbing Hardknot and Wrynose, he put in an appearance at Skelwith-bridge, near Ambleside, where Mr. Branker of Clappersgate, and a few gentlemen, had got up a meeting. Singularly enough, he came against four of the best men in the north, and threw the lot, namely—William Bacon and Jemmy Little, both of Sebergham, Thomas Grisedale of Patterdale, and finally Richard Chapman of Patterdale. Having every requisite, he might have gone on winning—but gave up; and is now the respected and prosperous tenant farmer of Brotherelkeld.

Towards the close of the eighteenth and the commencement of the nineteenth century, the most distinguished exponents of wrestling in the Windermere portion of the lake district, were John Barrow, the Dixons of Grasmere, the Longs of Ambleside, William Wilson of Ambleside, the Flemings of Grasmere, well to do farmers—and "Young Green." We should have felt an interest in giving more lengthy sketches of the more prominent men, but, unfortunately, there exists a great paucity of information. Every exertion has been made to gather together whatever was available; but the gleanings are exceedingly imperfect and fragmentary. Local newspapers did not then collect much local intelligence; and although they kept a keen eye to business as regards wrestling advertisements, they scarcely ever mentioned even the names of any prize winners.

The celebrated Windermere champion, John Barrow, flourished in the wrestling ring in the early part of the present century. The author of *Wrestliana*—one whose judgment may be relied on—pays him a deserved compliment, when he rates him as "the most renowned wrestler of this period," and "a match for any man in the kingdom." He stood fully six feet, and weighed fourteen stones. His favourite chip was the inside stroke—indeed, it was generally considered he invented the inside chip, and that "Belted Will" got it from Barrow. Most assuredly, the pair have grassed scores with it, and were quite as clever as Adam Dodd of Langwathby, with the outside stroke. These two men, and Abraham Brown, (afterwards the jovial curate of Egremont,) were all about the same height and weight: equally scientific; and all veritable "cocks of the north."

Litt is astray with some particulars of John Barrow's tragic fate. He makes it out he was drowned in shallow water, and that he was an "excellent swimmer." Now, the fact is, he was no swimmer, and where the boat upset and went down, the lake is of considerable depth. He was out trying the sailing qualities of a new boat of his own building. The mainsail being injudiciously fastened to the belaying pin, a violent gust of wind struck the boat; it upset, and the strong man went down, unable to wrestle with his remorseless foe. Two plucky girls at Belle Grange, saw the accident; got

a row boat, and set off to the rescue. They were successful in saving all in the boat, except the unfortunate builder. One of the persons in the boat when it upset,was John Balmer, and he lived to the patriarchal age of one hundred and one years. After the boat went over, he managed to grasp and keep hold of a floating plank, and was safely landed near Gill-head, a little below Storrs Hall. The first words he spoke after the disaster were, "Them 'at's born to be hang't, is suèr nit to be droon't!" This proverbial saying came to be linked with his name, and is still quoted in the neighbourhood as, "āld Jack Balmer' sayin'." His portrait, painted by Sammy Crosthwaite, a short time before his death, is still preserved.

The sunken boat still remains at the bottom, and is well known to the Windermere fishermen, who reckon to clear the wreck with about twenty-five fathoms of netting out, and generally catch when they let go an additional fathom or two. Professor Wilson saw the catastrophe and the rescue. This distinguished man had had, no doubt, many boating excursions with poor Barrow, and being himself a capital wrestler, and keen of the sport, it is likely he would have many a tussle with the Windermere champion. It is said that on one of his excursions out of Wasdale, to the top of Scawfell, with Will Ritson, the cheery, popular, yarn-spinning landlord of the well-known Wasdale-head hostelry, that on arriving near the summit of the hill

—which is the highest ground in England—the two, surrounded on all sides by mighty mountains, had several keenly contested wrestling bouts. The writer remembers well the famed Professor, when time had wrought a change in the manly form, visiting the Flan in its palmy days, and receiving respectful attention from all parties on the crowded grandstand.

After this short digression, recording the fate of "a great wrestler and a good man," we must return to Miles Dixon. He was born in the year 1781, at either "Far" or "Near Sawrey." They form two villages, but are so little apart that they may both be classed as "Sawrey;" and are situated half-way between Hawkshead and the Ferry on Windermere. No more beautifully located, clean, bright looking, secluded villages are to be found in all the Lake district. The most prominent and interesting view from "Near Sawrey," is Esthwaite lake; and all around to the south, south-west, and north-west, there appears a wide extent of richly wooded undulating country. From "Far Sawrey," there is a view of the lower reaches of Windermere, and a vast panorama of undulating hill and vale.

Miles's father followed the primitive occupation of a wood-cutter, felling timber trees and young trees of fifteen or sixteen years growth, called *coppice wood*, used for making hoops and charcoal. While his sons were "lile lads," he removed across Windermere to the vale of Troutbeck, and then in a short time migrated to Grasmere, where he settled.

Miles Dixon's full stature was six feet three inches; and his general wrestling weight, fifteen-and-a-half stones. His favourite move in the ring was to lift his opponent from the ground one way, then throw him quickly back the other—and dispose of him, so to speak, with a twist. His herculean powers enabled him to do this effectually. He had other tactics on which to fall back, but occasions very rarely occurred when these had to be called into action. His quiet habits, and mild enthusiasm for wrestling, often made him careless. Had he possessed a greater amount of ambition, and followed the wrestling ring more closely, we should undoubtedly have had to record a much more numerous list of achievements. Professor Wilson hits off some of his leading characteristics very happily when he says: "Honest and worthy Miles, if put into good heart and stomach, and upon his own dunghill, was, in our humble opinion, a match for any cock in Cumberland."

Young Dixon won his first belt at Grasmere, when only about sixteen years old. John Fletcher, the village carrier, a powerful sixteen-stone man, wrestled second. It so happened the carrier was very ambitious of winning first honours, and feeling sorely disappointed at being thus checkmated by a beardless boy, tore the waistcoat off his opponent's back, in a passion, and for a long time bore the victor a grudge.

During one of the militia meetings at Kendal, a

good deal of "braggin'" took place respecting the wrestling abilities of one Harrison, a man who stood six feet high, and weighed fully fifteen stones. Miles Dixon was pressed to take Harrison's challenge up, but gave his friends no encouragement that he would do so, and seemed to be very careless and indifferent about the matter. Ned Wilson and William Mackereth at length backed Dixon, the best of three falls, for a guinea, being all the money they could muster between them. Harrison in the match lost the two first falls easily, and was so chagrined at the defeat, that he absented himself from drill for several days.

At the Windermere gathering, held at Waterhead, near Ambleside, in 1810, there was a considerable amount of rivalry displayed as to whether the belt should stay in Westmorland, or go to Cumberland. John Wilson, the young squire of Elleray, then fresh from Oxford, was the principal getter up of the sports. He was all enthusiasm, and heartily backed Westmorland. In Miles Dixon's absence the previous year, Tom Nicholson had carried off the first prize. He now returned again, to do all that lay in his power to be the winner a second time, bringing with him his brother John, and Joseph Slack from Blencow. William Litt came over Hard-knot and Wrynose, from West Cumberland, riding on a good horse, and wearing a pair of high top boots. He called at Skelwith-bridge for refreshment, and stayed there all night, previous to the meeting.

Getting a little "fresh" at the snug hostelry, as the hours went on, he began to be communicative about the morrow's proceedings, and laid down the law with great precision. According to his theory, Tom Nicholson would be first, and "yan Litt" second: of this there could be no doubt whatever. "Nay, nay," said mine host, not then knowing who the traveller was, "Nay, nay, I think nit! Theear' some Dixons o' Gersmer'—meàst sowan good 'ans—'ill be to fell first!" An old miller "com' ower t' Raise,"* in the rear of the Cumberland men, on purpose to bet, and rifle the pockets of the Westmorland lads. Tom King, owner of The Hollins, in Grasmere, annoyed at the never ceasing din made by the miller, said to Dixon: "Miley, if thoo's gāen to du' thy best, noo, I'll away an' tak' yon āld fule up." He forthwith went and bet guinea after guinea, until the miller began to think it prudent to venture no further.

Early on, Miles threw a Yorkshire waller, named Harrison, a heavy man, and a good wrestler. He was afterwards called out against William Litt, with whom he had a hard tug. The excitement was extreme. Curiously enough, the two men started with the same tactics. "Te'àn triet to lift, an' tudder triet to lift," and both being heavy men, the exertion became very irksome work. The result was that Litt was thrown "lang streàk't" on his

* Dunmail Raise, which divides Cumberland and Westmorland.

back, amid deafening cheers. Like many men who are losers, Litt complained in *Wrestliana* of "unfair play," and brings half-a-dozen excuses forward as the reasons why he lost the fall. In the case of Miles Dixon and Litt having had another fall, Professor Wilson says: "Whether Mr. Litt could or could not have thrown Miles, can never be positively known in this world." The final fall, between Dixon and Tom Nicholson, was not of long duration. No sooner were they in holds, than the former lifted his opponent clearly from the ground, and disposed of him easily with a twist. The belt was then handed to Miles Dixon, by Mr. Wilson, who complimented him warmly on the victory he had gained. The future Protessor of Moral Philosophy took the belt to Edinburgh with him. After the lapse of a couple of years, it was returned to the winner, with the following inscription engraved on a silver plate: "Won by Miles Dixon, at a Grand Wrestling Match, between the Westmorland, Lancashire, and Cumberland Lads, 1810." The belt is still in the possession of the family at Grasmere. It is made of leather, about two inches broad, and mounted with silver buckle and inscription plate.

In 1811, Dixon did not wrestle at Ambleside. In 1812, when thirty-one years old, he put in an appearance again, and virtually carried off the first prize. Litt says, "Miles Dixon and a butcher in Ambleside were the two last standers. They agreed

to wrestle two or three falls for the gratification of the gentlemen who had subscribed towards the wrestling, and in this friendly trial Miles Dixon was victorious."

Miles died in June, 1843, aged sixty-two years. A headstone in Grasmere churchyard bears the following testimony to his worth: "The uniform integrity of his conduct, has induced one who appreciated his worth, to erect this memorial."

His widow—a thrifty, sensible, managing housewife—died in 1875, aged ninety-one years. Wrestling meetings, and similar gatherings, she treated with marked contempt. A frequent saying of hers, about her husband as a wrestler, was: "Ivery shillin' he wan, cost us two!" She used to compare those who took part in such exercises to "a lot of potters an' tinklers, 'at dud nowte but nip an' squeeze yan anudder to deeàth!"

James Dixon, brother to Miles, was born at the before-mentioned village of Sawrey. He died at Beck Houses, Grasmere, in 1866, aged seventy-eight years. In height, he stood six feet three inches, and his general wrestling weight was fourteen stones. His favourite chip in the ring was an outside stroke.

When young, he wrestled at a gathering of militia at Kendal, and won. In 1809, at the Ambleside meeting, he came against Tom Nicholson of Threlkeld, in one of the latter rounds. According to

the most reliable information we have been able to gather, the latter lost fairly enough, but owing to some oversight on the part of the umpires, they decided it must be a wrestle over, to which course of procedure Dixon naturally objected.

In 1811, he won the head prize at the Ferry Inn wrestling, Windermere. Richard Luther Watson, of Calgarth, a son of the Bishop of Llandaff, officiated as steward. In addition to the wrestling, which commenced early in the afternoon, there was a regatta on the lake, and prizes were given also for leaping and running. The belt won at the Ferry is still kept, in a good state of preservation, at Grasmere. It is made of leather, about four feet six inches in length, by two inches in breadth, with a silver buckle, and inscription plate: "Presented by the Steward of the Windermere Regatta, to the conqueror at the Grand Wrestling Match, on the 17th July, 1811."

At one of the Windermere gatherings, with Miles and James Dixon both thrown, a general buzz ran round the ring that Roan Long was sure to be the final victor. Just at the moment when this opinion was prevalent, George Dixon, an elder brother, very bow-legged, stepped into the ring, exclaiming, "Tak' time, lads; tak' time! Aw t' Dixons errant doon yet!" Coming as a counter-blast to the prevailing opinion, this saying created much merriment among the spectators. Surely enough, the current of the tide which had set so strongly against

the Dixons, was turned, for Roan was cleverly thrown. George was a stiff stander, difficult to get at, and often very bad to move.

Besides prizes incidentally mentioned in this narrative, the three brothers won many others, records of which, it is to be feared, have passed away with the contemporary generation who witnessed and took part in them.

The Dixons were wallers by profession, and many of the bridges in the immediate vicinity of the lake country were built by them. One notable fact relating to their bridge-building is worth mentioning. About the year 1828, Muncaster bridge, over the river Esk, near Ravenglass, was built by some one whose name has not been recorded. The bridge had a considerable span, and a high tide, and a furious mountain torrent pouring down out of Eskdale, washed it away. Another man then undertook the rebuilding of it, but failed to carry out the details, and finally gave up in despair. Lord Muncaster being disgusted with the unsuccessful attempts, and hearing of the celebrity of the Dixons, sent to Grasmere for them. The three brothers set about the work in good earnest, and in the month of June, 1829, the keystone of the bridge was fixed, with considerable ceremony. A handsome sum of money was collected, for a day's festivity and sports, and the Dixons gave two barrels of ale. The prize for wrestling fell to one William Dickinson of Langley Park, a farm on the

Bootle side of the bridge. The foot-race and leaping were both carried off by a young man from Eskdale, named William Vickers.

Lord Muncaster was so well pleased with the skill and persevering industry displayed by the builders, that he caused the following inscription —which remains to this day—to be placed on the east side of the bridge:

MDCCCXXIX.

THIS BRIDGE BUILT BY MEN FROM GRASMERE.

Commercially speaking, Muncaster bridge was an advantageous affair for the Dixons. The successful accomplishment of the work spread their fame as builders far and wide, and assisted materially towards establishing them nicely in the world. Miles and James became purchasers of estates, through industrious and economic habits.

We have heard it stated that Lady Richardson of Lancrigg—the wife of the arctic explorer—once contemplated writing an account of Miles and James Dixon (who, by the way, are both mentioned in the interesting memoir of her mother, MRS. FLETCHER). How she intended treating the subject-matter of their lives, we cannot tell; probably more in their domestic relations to the people of Grasmere vale, than as athletes in the wrestling ring.

After John Barrow and the Dixons, it is somewhat singular and remarkable to note the large number

of first-rate lake-side wrestlers that came out; and it may not be amiss to bestow a passing notice on the foremost. Before the Dixons had retired, the two Longs—Rowland, commonly called Roan, and John—the one a giant in size and strength, and the other a big burly man—figured in the ring; then—most renowned in the galaxy—William Wilson of Ambleside. He appeared all over the beau ideal of a heavy weight wrestler; "lish as a cat," straight as a wand, good shoulders, and long arms. When about his best, there had never before been seen such a consummate master of the hype; and no one since can claim to be his equal. His action was so quick and irresistible, that his opponents went down as if completely helpless. In 1822, William Richardson of Caldbeck, a most successful hyper, had not "the shadow of a chance" with Wilson; he also struck down the gigantic Mc.Laughlin of Dovenby, in such a style as "no other man in the kingdom could have done." In appearance he resembled William Jackson of Kinneyside, with the same gentlemanly conduct in the ring, and the same good tempered bearing to his opponents. Unfortunately, this bright particular star became subject to a wasting disease when hardly at his best, and was soon lost to the wrestling world, and a large circle of admiring friends.

Then followed Tom Robinson, the schoolmaster, Richard Chapman, George Donaldson, Joseph Ew-

bank, a Haweswater lake sider; William Jackson, an Ennerdale lake sider; and Thomas Longmire—men whose names and deeds will be cherished as long as "wruslin'" is a household word in the north. These have all gone hence, or are "in the downhill of life." At present there is not one man of note on the immediate borders of Windermere, Ullswater, or Derwentwater.

ROWLAND AND JOHN LONG

OF AMBLESIDE.

ROWLAND LONG, generally called "Roan," may be considered one of the biggest of our northern athletes, but by no means one of the most distinguished for science and activity—an immense, but somewhat inert, mass of humanity. He was born and brought up at Graythwaite, a beautiful country of woodland slopes and green dells, laying contiguous to the west side of lake Windermere, in North Lancashire. The father of John and Rowland, farmed a small estate of land under the ancient family of Sandys of Graythwaite Hall.

Rowland was born about the year 1778. While even a lad, he developed into gigantic proportions of body, limbs, and bone. When only seventeen years old, he weighed seventeen stones, and was looked on at that time as a wonder by all the country side, for size and strength. On arriving at maturity, his full stature reached six feet two inches, and he weighed never less than eighteen stones. In truth, a man of colossal appearance, looking "as breeàd as a yak tree across t' shooders," as big limbed and heavy footed as Goliah of Gath, and

with a grip like the hug of a polar bear. His principal move in the ring was to make a rush at his adversary, push him backward, and throw in the "ham"; then, if well got in, woe to the unlucky wight who felt the crushing weight of eighteen or nineteen stones.

From a well known deficiency in points of science and activity, it may naturally be conjectured that most of his achievements were gained by main strength, on one hand, and stubborn standing on the other.

In one sense, Roan Long's career is the most perplexing one with which we have to deal. The fact is pretty well established, that he won no less than ninety-nine belts; and at various places he tried hard to make the number up to an even hundred, but laboured in vain. The perplexing point is—where, and at what dates, did he win those belts? We may take it for granted that the field of his operations was confined principally to Windermere and its neighbourhood; and that his successful career as a wrestler commenced about the year 1796, and ended in 1812. Most of the details during those sixteen years are, unfortunately, not forthcoming.

We learn incidentally that he "yance hed a ter'ble hard day's russlin' at Bouth fair, whār he fell't three or fower o' t' biggest chaps he iver fell't in his life." Probably this was the time he had the fearful tug with Arthur Burns, one of the Ullater family, near

Rusland. Burns stripped off a tall, active, well built, six-foot man, who stuck to the giant most determinedly, and tried hard to get him to make play without effect, until the struggle became one of mere animal strength. The upshot was that Burns came to grief, and unluckily came out of the ring so much mauled about the ribs, that he never recovered fully from the punishment inflicted.

At one of the village gatherings, held at Grasmere, Tom Ashburner, a "statesman" of the valley, entered his name among the wrestlers for the sole purpose of trying a round with Roan. Being fortunate enough to be called against him, and having succeeded in getting the fall, he retired from further contest, saying as he did so, to the younger hands: "Noo, lads, I've clear'd t' rooad for yee: work yer way!"

In 1811, Roan, then about thirty-three years old, attended the third annual meeting held at Carlisle, but was singularly unfortunate. He was thrown in the first round, by John Watson, who the next time over laid down to Tom Nicholson.

At the Windermere Regatta, held at the Ferry hotel, in July, 1812, he won his ninety-ninth and last belt. Previously he had won several belts at the same place. No part of this final trophy is left, but the inscription plate—in the possession of Mr. Backhouse, farmer, near Low Wood—which runs: "To the Hero of the Regatta, on Windermere, 1812."

After this date, we obtain passing glimpses of

Roan entering various rings, and trying in vain to make up the hundredth prize. In 1824, the old veteran—having then contended more or less for twenty-eight years—was thrown at Low Wood Regatta, by one Hodgson, who wrestled third; and even as late as 1828, he wrestled at Ambleside fair, where he was disposed of by John Holmes, a tall six-foot tailor. This proved the last time he ever contended for a prize—saying, as he bade farewell to the ring, "I think it's time to give ower, noo, when a bit iv a tailyer can thrā' me!"

Roan's match with William Richardson of Caldbeck will be found described in the sketch of Richardson's career.

Many years elapse, and Roan is sitting among the onlookers of the wrestling, at Ambleside sports. After Longmire had carried off several big men with the swinging hype—eliciting the admiration of all beholders—old Roan said to the young aspirant, in a drawling tone of voice: "Thoo cudn't ha' trailed *me* by t' neck i' that way, my lad!"

If Roan Long was deficient in science and activity, and did not cut the brilliant figure in the wrestling ring that some of his contemporaries did, he, nevertheless, habitually maintained through a long span of existence, many points of much greater importance, in a social view—such, for example, as plodding perseverance, singleness of purpose, and sturdy independence of character—traits in themselves truly commendable, and far above any merely

nominal honours which the wrestling arena could bestow.

Roan's occupation was that of a wood-cutter and wood-monger. In company with the Robinsons of Cunsey—two brothers—he worked in the woods around Windermere, for many years. Robert Robinson, one of the brothers, was a very powerful man, nearly six feet high, with broad massive shoulders, and herculean thighs. During the height of the wood-cutting season, these men toiled and wrought from daybreak to dusk, more like galley slaves than free-born Englishmen; often continuing their laborious employment half through moonlight nights. On certain occasions, when arriving at the woods before daybreak, they have been known to sit down and eat their dinners "while they'd time," as they phrased it, in order to keep themselves "frae hankerin' efter 't throo t' day." With coat, waistcoat, and shirt off, Roan used frequently to yoke himself in a cart, heavily laden with wood, and had to "snig" like a horse, while the two Robinsons placed themselves behind the cart, and regulated their motions according to the necessity of the case.

One time, in Finsthwaite woods, when going down a steep hill, so "brant" that horses were practically useless, the Robinsons let go the cart for nothing else but pure devilment, and off went Roan, taking giant-like strides, until he could hold on no longer; and was obliged to throw the cart

over into the steep incline below, and extricate himself as best he could. After having been a considerable time in partnership, he began to think the Robinsons were not doing the clean thing by him, in some other matters, and in consequence dissolved all connexion with them.

Later on, Roan—who through life was a pattern of industry and integrity—kept a nursery and vegetable garden at Ambleside. While so occupied, it was his wont to overlook operations from a small wooden house in the garden, where he sat as closely wedged up almost as a veritable Gog or Magog.

A few days before his death, he sent for his neighbour, John Cowerd, a joiner by trade, to give him instructions about the making of his coffin. "Noo, John," said he, "I s' nit be lang here, I knā' I shallant; an' I want to speeàk to yee about my coffin. Mak' me a good heart o' yak yan, an' *nowt but yak.* Noo, mind what I's sayin'; I want nin o' yer deeàl-bottom't sooart—*nin o' yer deeàl-bottom't sooart for me!*" repeated the dying man again and again. Many coffins had been made in the same shop, but never one anything like Roan's for size. It measured two feet three inches across the breast, inside measure. A custom prevailed in the workshop to try most of the coffins made, by the length of some workman. On this occasion, one Michael Rawlinson, the biggest man employed, was press-ganged into Roan's coffin, but scarcely half-filled it, and presented a very ludicrous picture for the time being.

Roan's death took place at Ambleside, about the year 1852 ; aged seventy-four years.

JOHN LONG, born also at Graythwaite in Furness Fells, about the year 1780, formed in many respects a marked contrast to his brother Roan, and was considered by good judges to be much the better wrestler of the two. In height, he stood five feet ten inches, and weighed about fourteen stones. In his prime, he was a remarkably fine built man: firm, compact, and well developed in every part, with clean action ; in fact, from head to foot he might be said to be symmetry typified.

John had the credit of winning many prizes on the banks of his native Windermere; but not having the ambition of his brother for wrestling distinction, he never rambled far from home in search of adventure ; nor did he follow the sport for anything like the same lengthened period. We are sorry that no available and reliable means can be come at touching his feats in the ring. His well known accomplishments as a wrestler richly entitle him to a more extended notice than it is in our power to give.

At the Ambleside wrestling, in 1811, John Long was second to William Mackereth, the winner, a young man from Cockermouth, a friend and companion of Tom Nicholson. Nicholson had grassed the well known John Lowden of Keswick, but suffered a grievous defeat in the fourth round when

he met John Long. This of itself must be considered sufficient to stamp the victor a wrestler of considerable ability, as Tom was then at his best, and was looked upon by his admirers as a match for any man in the kingdom.

In early life, John followed wood-cutting through the spring and winter months; and in autumn, he generally went off to the "shearings" in Low Furness and West Cumberland. For a lengthened period he was chief boatman at the Ferry inn, Windermere, in which capacity he is well remembered. When up in years, he displayed a good deal of ready wit and droll humour. He has been spoken of—by the most successful wrestler that Windermere has produced—as "a queer sly āld dog, 'at nin o' t' young 'ans cud reetly mak' oot, whedder he was in fun or earnest."

In the *Folk-Speech* volume of dialect stories and rhymes, Alexander Craig Gibson describes the sturdy figure of the old wrestler as follows, and then proceeds to make him relate the tale of the "Skulls of Calgarth," in his native *patois*.

And Benjamin's chief ferryman was stalwart old John Long,
A veteran of the wrestling ring, (its records hold his name,)
Who yet in life's late autumn was a wiry wight and strong,
Though grizzly were his elf-locks wild, and bow'd his giant frame.

Yes; though John Long was worn and wan, he still was stark and strong,
And he plied his bending "rooers" with a boatman's manly pride,

As crashing past the islands, through the reed stalks crisp
and long,
He stretch'd away far northward, where the lake spread fair
and wide.

"Now rest upon your oars, John Long," one evening still
said I,
When shadows deepened o'er the mere from Latterbarrow
Fell;
For far beyond broad Weatherlam the sun sank in the sky,
And bright his levell'd radiance lit the heights around Hillbell.

"And tell me an old story," thus I further spoke, "John
Long,
Some mournful tale or legend, of the far departed time;
The scene is all too solemn here for lightsome lay or song,
So tell, and, in your plain strong words, I'll weave it into
rhyme."

Then old John Long revolved his quid, and gaunt he look'd
and grim—
For darker still athwart the lake spread Latterbarrow's
shade—
And pointing o'er the waters broad to fields and woodlands
dim,
He soberly and slowly spake, and this was what he said, &c.

John Long died at the little hostelry on Kirkstone Pass, the highest inhabited house in England, about the year 1848.

TOM NICHOLSON

OF THRELKELD.

AMONG the distinguished athletes of a byegone period, not one in the long list has conferred a more enduring celebrity on the wrestlings of the north, than the Threlkeld champion, Tom Nicholson. He owed this high position not to overpowering strength and weight, but to what lends its principal charm to back-hold wrestling—science and activity. These, added to entire confidence and fearlessness, rendered him a match for any of the big ones of his day.

In youth he was a wild, harum-scarum sort of a fellow, hardly ever out of one scrape before he was floundering into another. A fight or a fray seemed always welcome. "He cared for nowte." A Jem Belcher of the wrestling ring and the pugilistic ring, too, of the north; one who never feared the face of man, and had so much confidence in his own powers, that whoever he chanced to meet in the ring, whether as "big as a hoose side," or "strang as a yak tree," he felt confident he could throw him.

He stood close upon six feet; lean, muscular, with broad and powerful shoulders; had remarkably

long arms, reaching—when at full length, and standing perfectly upright—down to his knees; his weight never exceeding thirteen stones; without an ounce of superflous flesh. He generally commenced the attack by striking the back of his opponent's heel with the right foot.

Tom was born at Threlkeld, near Keswick, about the year 1785, and died at Keswick in February, 1851. His father, "oald Ben Nicholson," acted as parish clerk and sexton at Threlkeld for many years, following, too, the occupation of a builder. He brought up his two sons, Tom and John, as builders, or in the vernacular of the district, "wo'ers." Tom was the elder brother, and a much more powerful man than John. The latter, in the opinion of many good judges, was superior both in science and quickness. Being a light weight, his name does not appear with much prominence in the wrestling records of the time. Special prizes were not then given for light weights; and in consequence, John did not often become last stander. The two brothers were, however, sometimes first and second.

It was not alone in wrestling that Tom became a noted character. He could probably display more feats of activity in his day, than any man in the north of England. He has been known to "hitch an' kick" ten feet high: that is to say, if a hat were placed on a pole, or hung on the ceiling of a house ten feet high, he could leap up, and hit the hat with one foot, without falling to the ground. Among

other places, this was done at the Red Lion inn, Grasmere, in 1810, where Miles Dixon, Harry Chapman, and other athletes were onlookers. Another feat of his consisted in covering twelve yards in three leaps of three rises, measuring from heel to heel. This he often did, leaping the full distance forwards, and then turning round and leaping the same distance back again. A frequent saying of his was, that he could "stand a yard, stride a yard, an' tak' a yard under ayder arm."

We have no reliable means of recording all the victories Tom achieved; and we suppose no chronicler is left who can tell where he gained his first belt. We know he became such an enthusiast as to rise often at three or four o'clock in a morning, in order to get his day's work finished by noon; and afterwards has travelled a dozen miles, to wrestle for "a lal bit iv a ledder strap, nūt worth mair ner fifteen-pence." Luckily, there is a record of the more important prizes gained at Carlisle, in 1809, 1810, and 1811—a succession of unbroken victories seldom accomplished by a thirteen-stone man.

In the year 1809, Nicholson, then twenty-three or twenty-four years old, attended some sports or merry-making at Penrith. While there, he chanced to see an advertisement setting forth the liberal prizes for wrestling, offered on the following day at the Waterhead, Ambleside. Having some little acquaintance with the Dixons of Grasmere, through working

with them at the Bridge-end, Legberthwaite, Tom felt a strong desire to attend the meeting. After dancing all night at Penrith, he left by way of Patterdale and Kirkstone Pass. Having reached Ambleside, he found the head of the lake crowded with pleasure boats and yachts; flags flying, drums beating, and an immense gathering of people assembled in holiday attire, anxiously waiting to witness the sports.

Being overcome by fatigue and want of rest, he went into one of the tents for some refreshment, and soon fell fast asleep in a chair. A waller, named James Benson, who belonged to Ambleside, chanced to hear one of the Dixons say incidentally to the Longs: "I suppooàs Tom Nicholson's here. If we don't mind what we're duin', he'll fell us aw!" Seeing a stranger asleep soon after, Benson went and gave him a tap with his foot, saying: "Do they co' yee Tom Nicholson?" Being thus aroused, Tom started hastily to his feet, and replied in the affirmative. "Well, then," said Benson, "if ye've come to russel, ye'll hev to be stirrin' yersel'! *They're thrāwin' t' belt up for t' last time!*"

Hastening to the scene of action—a small field near the lake—Tom got his name entered in the list. No doubt, the previous fatigue and consequent exhaustion would, in some measure, detract from the dash and force of his wrestling. Notwithstanding this, he managed to pull off the chief prize, throwing both Rowland and John Long. Two of the Dixons

—George and James—of Grasmere, also contended, and both came against the Threlkeld man. The former was unmistakeably thrown; but the latter, in the opinion of a great many spectators round the ring, ought to have had the fall. The umpires, however, came to the conclusion it was a dog-fall, and Dixon felt so chagrined at the decision, that he refused to re-enter the ring.

In after life, Nicholson used to "brag" that at this Ambleside gathering, he threw four of the biggest men he ever grassed in one day in his life, namely, Roan and John Long, and George and James Dixon. In relating this exploit, however, the fall with the last mentioned had always to be passed over as quietly as possible, lest some "unbelieving dog" should think proper to retort, and mar the harmony of the relator's narrative.

Next year, Tom again attended the Ambleside meeting, accompanied by his brother John, and Joseph Slack from Blencow. William Litt also figured, as one of the West Cumberland great guns, but had to succumb to Miles Dixon. Slack laid down to Tom, who threw Roan Long and his brother John. Coming against Miles Dixon, for the final fall, he was cleanly lifted from the ground without any difficulty, and thrown with a twist.

In 1811, we find Tom at the Ambleside meeting for the third and last time. William Mackereth of Cockermouth accompanied him on this occasion. Tom had an arduous struggle with

John Lowden of Hussecar in Newlands, "a stoot good russeler," who had then scarcely reached maturity. Lowden always claimed the first fall, but acknowledged that he lost the third one fair enough —the second one being a dog-fall. In the third round, Tom again disposed of Roan Long, but was cleverly thrown by John Long the next time over. It will thus be seen, the Threlkeld champion succeeded at Ambleside once only in the three years of his attendance; while at Carlisle, where he also contended three years, he came off victorious in each entry. This is strong testimony to the celebrity of the Windermere wrestlings.

For two years previously, John Wilson of Elleray had encouraged the wrestlings at Ambleside, by subscribing liberally, and taking a personal interest in so conducting the sports as to render them worthy of the patronage of the neighbouring gentry. All who have attended wrestling meetings, cannot but be aware that occasions will often occur, when the presence of such gentlemen as the squire of Elleray is of great use. There is ample evidence to show that he was devotedly fond of the sport. When he left the lakes to make Edinburgh his permanent place of residence, the wrestlings at Ambleside, which had attained extraordinary celebrity, declined for a time, but again shone with renewed brilliancy at Low Wood, Bowness, and the Ferry.

Before taking leave of Nicholson's Windermere exploits, we must record a *fracas* he had once

with John Wilson, at the "Nag's Head," Wythburn, a little wayside inn, eight miles from Ambleside, lying immediately under the shadow of the "mighty Helvellyn," and much frequented up to the present time by pedestrian tourists. Some sports—wrestling being the principal, of course—were held at the above out-of-the-way hostelry. At that time, considerable rivalry existed between the wrestlers of Cumberland and Westmorland. The Elleray squire freely backed the Westmorland men, and Tom Nicholson was not a whit behind-hand in as freely backing the Cumbrians. Now, it so happened, they both got excited over a doubtful fall. The future literary luminary insisted that his man had got the fall; while Tom vehemently maintained an opposite opinion, and bandied ugly words very freely.

In a fit of momentary passion, Wilson struck Tom over the shoulders with his stick. This bellicose style of argument instantly led to a violent scene, and there appeared every likelihood of a most determined contest. Wilson was at that time a match for almost any man in the kingdom. A professed pugilist, after receiving a sound thrashing from him on the banks of the Isis, had been heard to say: "This must be either the devil or Jack Wilson!" And Nicholson had proved the victor in many a hard fought contest. A battle between the two disputants at the "Nag's Head," would have been a fearfully punishing affair to both of them. This was happily avoided, in consequence

of their friends stepping in, and putting a stop to any further infringement of the peace.

The ball thus set rolling at Ambleside for two years—of giving handsome money prizes—was followed up at the Carlisle Races, where the *first* annual wrestling on the Swifts took place in the month of September, 1809. The successful establishment of the great northern wrestling meeting, was due principally to the endeavours of Mr. Henry Pearson, solicitor, Carlisle.

The following extract from the *Carlisle Chronicle*, will demonstrate the gratifying result of what may be called the first *metropolitan* meeting:—

The athletic sports were superior to anything ever exhibited in Carlisle. The wrestling commenced on Wednesday morning, at ten o'clock, in a roped ring, thirty-five yards in diameter. There were present on the occasion not less than five thousand spectators, who came from all parts within a circuit of thirty miles, to see these gymnastic exercises. This was probably the best wrestling ever seen in Cumberland, as each competitor had been the winner of a great number of belts in the respective parts they came from. Every round was most severely contested, but the last one was the finest struggle ever seen: each of the combatants having given the other the cast three or four times; and they respectively recovered in a most surprising manner, to the astonishment and admiration of every one present. At length Nicholson, who comes from Threlkeld, gave Harrison the knee, and gained the prize.

The following is a list of those men who wrestled for the Purse of Five Guineas, on the Swifts, on Wednesday, September 13th:—

FIRST ROUND.

Stood.	*Fell.*
Robert Rowntree.	Thomas Allison.
Younghusband.	John Rowntree.
Joseph Dixon.	John Thompson.
Thomas Nicholson.	Daniel Wilson.
Goodfellow.	John Waugh.
John Watson.	John Jorden.
Matthew Armstrong.	Moses Hodgson.
Frank Moor.	John Relph.
Thomas Dickinson.	Thomas Cowen.
John Nicholson.	Joseph Bird.
John Dawson.	William Douglas.
Joseph Slack.	Thomas Burrow.
William Ritson.	Matthew Dickinson.
William Hodgson.	James Phillip.
John Harrison.	John Hudless.
Michael Hope.	Romney.

SECOND ROUND.

Robert Rowntree.	Younghusband.
Thomas Nicholson.	Joseph Dixon.
John Watson.	Goodfellow.
Matthew Armstrong.	Frank Moor.
John Nicholson.	Thomas Dickinson.
Joseph Slack.	John Dawson.
William Ritson.	William Hodgson.
John Harrison.	Michael Hope.

THIRD ROUND.

Thomas Nicholson.	Robert Rowntree.
John Watson.	Matthew Armstrong.
John Nicholson.	Joseph Slack.
John Harrison.	William Ritson.

FOURTH ROUND.

Stood.	*Fell.*
Thomas Nicholson.	John Watson.
John Harrison.	John Nicholson.

FIFTH ROUND.

Thomas Nicholson.	John Harrison.

Mr. HENRY PEARSON, *Head Manager.*
Mr. CHRISTOPHERSON, Mr. J. ARMSTRONG, *Clerks.*
Mr. TOPPIN, *Umpire.*

At the Penrith Race Meeting, in October, 1809, Tom Nicholson contested in the wrestling ring, but his career was soon cut short. In the first round, he threw Thomas Matthews; and in the second round, had to succumb to one Joseph Dixon, who was disposed of afterwards, in the fourth round, by John Gowling, the victor on that occasion.

At the Carlisle Wrestling, in October, 1810, there was an immense gathering of people on the Wednesday morning, to witness the wrestlers compete for two purses of gold. Sixty-four—almost all picked men—entered the ring, the head prize awarded being six guineas. This sum—at the time considered an important prize—fell a second time to Tom Nicholson, who threw again the formidable Robert Rowantree of Bewcastle, and the no less celebrated John Earl of Cumwhitton; and, in the final fall, floored Joseph Slack of Blencow. In connexion with the races, a ball on a grand scale was held

attended by more than three hundred ladies and gentlemen. The amusements of the week were concluded on Friday, by the Carlisle pack of harriers throwing off at Whiteclose-gate, when three hares were killed, and some excellent sport witnessed.

Tom and his brother, John, again figured at Carlisle in 1811, when Tom succeeded in carrying off the first honours for the third time, in the most difficult of all rings. The money prizes amounted to twenty pounds in all, and the sport was enjoyed by a dense mass of nearly twelve thousand people. The Earl of Lonsdale, the Marquis of Queensberry, Sir James Graham of Netherby, and various other gentlemen, were spectators. In the first round, Tom Nicholson threw John Forster easily. In the second, John Watson laid down. In the third round, he threw John Jordan of Great Salkeld. In the fourth, William Earl of Cumwhitton. In the fifth, John Douglas of Caldbeck; and, finally, John Earl of Cumwhitton.

John Nicholson threw John Taylor in the first round; and was thrown in the second by Joseph Richardson of Staffield Hall, a first-rate wrestler, and winner of the second day's prize.

Immediately after the general wrestling, Tom Nicholson was defeated in a match with Harry Graham of Brigham, an event which broke in somewhat abruptly upon the three consecutive victories gained by him on the Swifts. A lengthy account of this match will be found in Litt's *Wrestliana.*

The Carlisle ring of 1811 was the last in which Tom Nicholson contended for a prize. Whether he desired to retire, and rest upon the laurels he had gained, or not, we cannot say. He was rendered totally incapable of competing at Carlisle the following year, by having accidentally dislocated his shoulder at the Duke of Norfolk's jubilee, held at Greystoke Castle, in the middle of September, 1812. He married in 1815, and went to live at Keswick, where he settled down as a builder. Some years after he joined the firm of Gibson and Hodgson, builders, as a partner; and as a tradesman, was respected by all who knew him.

Tom used to say he could wrestle best at twenty years old. When at this age, and for some time after, he used to practice with George Stamper of Under-Skiddaw, an excellent wrestler; but being of a retiring, quiet disposition, he very seldom entered a ring. "Gwordie" could, however, get quite as many falls as Tom, out of a dozen bouts.

Some years after Tom had given up contending for prizes, he chanced to be at Cockermouth, with his friend and former pupil William Mackereth, and the conversation running a good deal on wrestling topics, they agreed to adjourn to a field in the vicinity, in order to try a few friendly bouts. After having had two or three falls, "Clattan"—a gigantic athlete—was noticed to be leaning listlessly, with both arms over the wall, looking at them. "Come, Clattan," shouted

Mackereth, "an' thee try a fo'. I can mak' nowte on him!" Thus invited, "Clattan" gathered up his huge carcass—six feet six inches high, at that time bony and gaunt-looking—and went stalking into the field, saying: "I's willin' to try him yā fo'; but, mind's t'e, *nobbut* yan." In taking hold, the giant tried to snap, but didn't succeed in bringing Tom down. After this they had two or three falls, in all of which Clattan was worsted. In referring to this incident, the victor always said he felt certain it was a made-up thing between Mackereth and the big one, that the latter should be "leukin' ower t' wo'," at a given time and place, as if by accident.

There is still another science in which Tom Nicholson excelled, namely, the art of self-defence; but as we have no sympathy whatever with any form of pugilistic encounter, except that which resolves itself into the purely *defensive* order, we shall only touch lightly on the subject. As a boy, Tom's undaunted courage, daring spirit, and surpassing activity, made him dreaded as a combatant; and from the time he thrashed "Keg," (Mc.Kay or Mc.Kie,) the Keswick bully, when trying to ride rough-shod over the Threlkeld youths, his fame as a boxer was fully established in his own neighbourhood.

In the summer of 1812, two Irishmen who were paring turf in Skiddaw forest, came to Keswick, and asked Joseph Cherry, the landlord of the Shoulder of Mutton, for Tom Nicholson. Tom

being sent for, was soon on the spot; when one of the Irishmen thus addressed him: "Shure, an' I suppose you're the champion of Cumberland?" "Well," replied Tom, "I don't know whedder I is or I issn't." "Faith! but I'm afther telling you, you *are*," said the Irishman, very crousely; "and by jabers! me and my mate are ready to fight anny two men in Cumberland!" "I know nowte aboot neà mates," replied Tom, whose spirit would never allow him to brook an unprovoked insult—"I know nowte aboot neà mates; but I's willin' to feight t' better man mysel', if that 'ill satisfy yé!" Accordingly, a wager was made for five pounds, and the two combatants went into the market-place without further parley—no county police to interfere at that time—and set to work in good earnest. Pat was beaten in nine rounds; and Tom, who sustained little injury, finished up "as fresh as a lark."

In the encounter on the Carlisle race ground, with Ridley, the *glutton*, in 1814, the issue was of a very different character, although the Threlkeld man was never in better "fettle" in his life. After half-an-hour's severe fighting, during which time the waves of victory flowed sometimes to one side, and sometimes to the other, the constables interfered, and very properly put a stop to the brutal sport.

As some palliation for the part which our hero took in the combat, Litt says: "We have the best authority for saying, that when Tom left home for Carlisle, he knew nothing of the match in question;

and that the behaviour of Ridley, who was on the look-out for him, and the wishes expressed by some amateurs to witness a trial of skill between them, made Tom erroneously think that his character was at stake, and that he could not decline the contest without incurring the charge of having 'a white feather in him.'"

Tom's love for daring adventure, or sport, seems never to have forsaken him. Even in middle life, when between forty and fifty years old, this idiosyncrasy would manifest itself. Among other pursuits, he has been known to follow salmon poaching in the river Derwent and its tributaries. Once when working at Mirehouse, for Mr. Spedding, he was joined by Pearson of Browfoot, John Walker, weaver and boatman, and four or five other men from Keswick, as lawless as himself, and almost as daring. The meeting had been previously arranged at the Shoulder of Mutton, then kept by Betty Cherry. Having chosen Tom as their captain, the gang started for Euse bridge, at the foot of Bassenthwaite lake, which place they reached a couple of hours after night-fall. Operations were commenced by placing two sentinels in commanding positions, one on the bridge, and the other—John Walker—on the opposite side of the hedge, a little lower down the river.

A "lowe" being "kinnel't," the stream was found to be literally swarming with fish. Little more than laying out their nets had been done, however, when

Walker shouted out: "Leùk oot, lads! they're comin'!" And just at that moment, a strong body of river watchers, numbering something like a dozen —who had evidently been laying in ambush— rushed pell-mell upon them. Walker being the first within reach, was knocked down and kept down; and the fight soon swayed fiercely from side to side. Maddened at the treatment of their mate, the poachers broke through the hedge which intervened, and fought desperately. Tom Nicholson punished one of the watchers, named Cragg, so severely, that the man had good reason to remember it for many a long year after. Walker being rescued, and the keepers chased from the ground, the poachers again took to the river, and returned nome heavily laden with spoil.

During the latter part of his life, Nicholson officiated frequently as umpire or referee in the Carlisle and other rings. Having dislocated his ancle by accidentally falling on the ice, his appearance in the capacity of umpire, impressed spectators with the idea that they looked on the shattered and broken-down frame of a muscular built man, supporting himself while moving about with a stout walking-stick. The last trace we have of him as umpire, was at the match between Jackson and Longmire, which came off at Keswick, in 1845.

WILLIAM MACKERETH

OF COCKERMOUTH.

WILLIAM MACKERETH—"built like a castle," being broad and massive from head to foot—was born and bred at Cockermouth. He was a pupil of Tom Nicholson's; but Tom could never teach him his own favourite chip of "clickin' t' back o' t' heel," and used to resort to that move when he wanted to throw him.

Mackereth was a good hyper; and threw Harry Graham of Brigham twice in succession, the first time that Litt and William Richardson met to wrestle the match at Workington, which never came off. He also threw John Long in Westmorland, and won. In speaking of Roan Long, Mackereth used to say his own hand was like a child's hand, compared to that of the giant's.

A common saying of his was, that he "was nobbut a thūrteen steàn man." To this Tom Nicholson generally retorted by saying, "*I* niver kent the', Will, when thoo was thūrteen steàn!" Tom called him fourteen stones, good weight.

Mackereth was brought up to the building trade, and ultimately became keeper of the gaol at Cockermouth for many years. He had an only daughter, who married and settled in Ireland, in which country he died about the year 1859.

HARRY GRAHAM

OF BRIGHAM.

HARRY GRAHAM was a clogger by trade, at Brigham, a pleasant but irregularly built village, whose square church tower catches the eye of the passing tourist between Cockermouth and Workington. Born and bred in the heart of a district which has produced many noted wrestlers, and practising the art from boyhood, Graham possessed rare abilities as an athlete; but was either too indifferent, or else of too petulant a disposition, to take his chance in the ring, like his compeers.

The most famous victory gained by Graham—and we know of no other of any moment—was the one over Tom Nicholson, in 1811, which goes far to prove him to have been, for his inches and weight, one of the best men West Cumberland has produced. Litt speaks of his having wrestled more matches than any man in the county, but fails to single out any others, wherein Graham was the conqueror, than the two mentioned in this brief notice.

Harry attended the annual meeting at Carlisle, in 1811, for the first and last time, and competed for the head prize. In the first round, he

threw one Thomas Hoodless, said by Litt to be "of some celebrity," but long since forgotten; and in the second round, he came against John Jordan of Great Salkeld, waller,* and fairly won the fall, without even going down. For some cause or other, the umpires decided it a dog-fall; and on taking hold a second time, Jordan won. This exasperated Harry's friends, who felt confident his rare science, quickness, and activity, rendered him a match for any man existing.

Be this as it may, a match was struck up with Tom Nicholson—the taller man by three inches—who backed himself for three pounds to two, the best of five falls. Harry lost the first and second. This made Tom's supporters cock-sure of winning the match. The third was disputable, and decided a dog-fall, although a great majority of the spectators insisted Harry won. The fourth and fifth he gained cleverly. They were then equal, with the dog-fall in dispute. After some squabbling, they began again afresh; and Harry won the match by scoring first, third, and fourth falls.

Graham's match with William Richardson—which

* Litt speaks unguardedly when he calls Jordan "a noted wrestler from the Penrith side," as there was nothing worthy of note about any of his performances in the ring. Nature had endowed him with a considerable amount of strength, but being almost destitute of science, he had only one mode of dealing with opponents, and that was "just to tew them doon!" One who knew him well, described him as "a greit rammin' sixteen-steàn man, creùk't back't, an' varra fond o' fishin'!"

he won, and which Litt sets forth as one of some importance—was merely the result of a drunken spree at Cockermouth. It took place in a garden belonging to the Old Buck inn. Among the handful of people who witnessed the scene, was John Murgatroyd, at that time a growing youth interested in the sport.

Harry left the locality of his native hills in 1822, and settled in Liverpool, where he brought up a family in a manner which reflected much credit upon himself. When more than sixty years old, he took a voyage to Australia, to join his eldest son, a graduate of Dublin university, who was following the scholastic profession, with a considerable amount of success, at the antipodes.

Graham died in November, 1878, at the venerable age of eighty-eight, and was buried in Shooter's-hill cemetery, near London.

JAMES SCOTT

OF CANONBIE.

Noo, Jamie Scott o' Cannobie,
He hied to Carel toon;
And mony a borderer cam to see
The English lads thrawn doon.
Border Ballad.

JAMES SCOTT was the lightest man who won the head prize in the Carlisle ring about his own time; and what is much more curious, the only Scotchman who ever accomplished the same feat. Indeed, it seems up to Scott's time, and since, too, that the borderers on the Scotch side did not take as much pleasure in the pastime as those dwelling on the English side.

Scott was born and brought up at Oarnlee, in the picturesque parish of Canonbie, in Dumfries-shire, within a few miles distance from the roofless tower of Gilnockie, the ancient stronghold of the noted border free-booter, Johnny Armstrong, of whose tragic fate in the presence of the Scottish king, the old minstrel thus sings:—

But then rose up all Edenborough,
They rose up by thousands three;
A cowardly Scot came John behind,
And run him through the fair bodye.

Said John, "Fight on my merry men all,
I am a little wounded, but not slain;
I will lay me down to bleed a while,
Then I'll rise, and fight with you again.

James Scott stood about five feet nine inches high, and weighed between eleven and twelve stones. Litt surmises that he was more than thirteen stones; but according to the most reliable authorities, this is much beyond the mark. He was a "tight built, streight, beàny mak' iv a fellow, withoot a particle o' lowse flesh aboot him." In the ring, he became noted as a quick striker, and bore the reputation of being a good scientific wrestler.

He never went much from home to contend, and, excepting in the Carlisle ring, is only known to have wrestled at the village gatherings, along the borders. He does not figure among the thirty-two men, who wrestled at the first annual meeting at Carlisle, in 1809. In the following year, when double that number contended, we think it hardly likely that he put in an appearance; but on this point we cannot speak with any amount of confidence, as there is no list of names known to be in existence.

In 1811, however, he did good service in the Carlisle ring, by throwing Joseph Wilson, John Hall, Joseph Coates, and William Richardson of Caldbeck; but sustained defeat at the hands of John Earl of Cumwhitton, in the fifth round. For

the second prize of the same year, he was cleverly thrown by George Little of Sebergham, (and not again by John Earl, as stated by Litt.)

At the Carlisle meeting held on Tuesday, the 20th day of September, 1812, the favourite north-country pastime attracted an immense gathering of spectators to the Swifts. Although the prizes offered amounted in all to the handsome sum of twenty guineas, there was a noticeable falling off in the attendance of wrestlers. Only forty-eight names were entered for the principal competition—the most noteworthy absentees being Tom Nicholson, (who was suffering from an accident at the Greystoke festival,) John Earl of Cumwhitton, Robert Rowantree of Bewcastle, and Harry Graham of Brigham.

Scott, who was then in his twenty-fourth year, turned up on the Swifts "i' grand fettle," and wrestled through the ring with much spirit, tact, and determination. The unexpected fall of William Mackereth of Cockermouth, the first time over, removed at least one formidable rival. John Jordan of Great Salkeld, falling in one of the subsequent rounds, left the coast as good as clear to Scott and Richardson, who ultimately came together in the final fall. Although wanting in the height, weight, and experience possessed by his veteran opponent, the wiry borderer had the advantage of youthful suppleness and activity on his side.

A good deal of time was wasted by the combatants; both tenaciously endeavouring to obtain the

better hold. Meanwhile a tall, red-haired, gaunt-looking Scotchman, made himself somewhat officious and troublesome to the umpires, by running to and fro into the ring, "wi' a wee drap whuskey, an' a hantle o' advice," in order to cheer up the spirits of the Canonbie lad. When holds had been obtained, after acting on the defensive for some time with much wariness, Scott managed to catch Richardson's heel, and by this means succeeded in carrying him off precisely in the same manner as he had done the preceding year. No sooner had the burly figure of the Caldbeck man kissed the greensward, than the air resounded again and again with lusty cheers for the Canonbie hero.

Everybody seemed astonished when "lāl Jamie Scott" fought his way through the ring; and probably no one was more astonished than himself. With eight bright guineas in his pocket, he received a hearty welcome on going back again, from all the "weel kent" faces he passed on his "hameward" journey to "Canobie lea."

Having gained first honours, Jamie inherited too much of the "canny" and prudent disposition of his countrymen, to risk tarnishing the victory which had thus fallen under somewhat favourable circumstances to his share. The Carlisle ring of 1812 was, we believe, the last one in which he contended for a prize.

Scott was a joiner by trade, and worked for several years at "Kirkcammeck," (Kirkambeck,) in

Stapleton, on the English side of the border. At the local gatherings in after years, he made a point of backing David Potts of Haining—a rather tricky customer—against John Blair of Solport Mill. Scott recommended Potts to rosin the inside of his pockets well, and rub his hands in them before taking hold of an opponent. "And than," said he, bestowing a hearty thump on his pupil's back, "no a man i' Cummerland need thraw the', if thou nobbut fews onything like!"

His cheerful and jocular disposition led him to be widely known on both sides of the border as "Canobie Jamie." He was specially fond of rural and field sports. In speed of foot he surpassed most of his companions. Many stories are told of the practical jokes and harmless tricks he used to play off on his neighbours and acquaintances; a few examples of which we may perhaps be allowed to relate as illustrative of his character.

"Canobie Jock," a well known voluble neighbour of his, partial to keeping up a breed of terriers and foxhounds of the right sort, had one of the former which he boasted was the fleetest dog of its kind in the parish. For a trifling wager, Jamie offered to run a race with Jock's terrier. The distance chosen was from one end of a good sized field to the other, through part of which a broad deep ditch extended, and had to be crossed. After starting, our hero found there existed every likelihood of his canine competitor leaving him some distance behind.

This induced him to hasten towards that part of the field where lay the deep ditch. With a single bound he cleared the distance in capital style. Meanwhile, before the poor terrier had time to swim the water, climb the banks, and shake itself, Jamie had got so far ahead as to be able to win easily—which he did, much to the discomfiture of the owner of the dog.

As an additional illustration of his nimbleness of foot, it may be mentioned that on another occasion, in coming "owre the hills frae Hawick," he ran down a cub fox, which he took home with him to Canonbie, and kept there in a tame state, until it became so troublesome and destructive among the hen-roosts of the neighbourhood, that he was obliged to put it down.

Jamie, and a cousin of his, were once invited to a wedding in the neighbourhood of Liddesdale, and, as it chanced, they could only muster a single horse between them. Under these circumstances, Scott thought it might be as well to give the natives of "Copshaw-holme," (Newcastleton,) something to amuse themselves with. Accordingly, he placed his cousin on the front of the horse, in the usual way, while he mounted behind, facing the opposite direction, with a straw rope drawn round the animal's tail for a bridle. In this comical fashion, the two men rode through the large open square of the old border village, amid the laughter and jeers of young and old.

One other story, and we must take leave of Jamie. When crossing a wild part of the country, it so happened that through being benighted, he was in danger of losing his way. Nearing a farmstead, the pleasing sound of a fiddle fell on his ears, which ultimately turned out to proceed from an adjoining barn, where a dancing school was held. On entering, Jamie met with a warm reception from the people assembled, and enjoyed the scene before him with much glee. Getting communicative with those around, he threw out some broadish hints that he thought he could dance a hornpipe or jig better than the dancing-master himself. To such a belief as this the teacher entirely demurred; and the difference of opinion thus set forth paved the way for a friendly contest. Notwithstanding being a good deal fatigued with travelling, Jamie managed to trip about with so much gracefulness and agility, that he was acknowledged by all present to have quite outrivalled the professor of the calisthenic art.

James Scott died at Oarnlee in the year 1854, aged sixty-six years.

ROBERT ROWANTREE,

OF KINGWATER.

ROBERT ROWANTREE, the subject of this brief memoir, was one of the big stalwart athletes of the wrestling ring in the "olden time," when wrestlers six feet high, and fourteen stones weight, were plentiful amongst the competitors of the northern arena. Rowantree was not so much distinguished for science as William Jackson, Richard Chapman, or the Donaldsons of more recent times; but was formidable from possessing great strength, a long reaching muscular arm, much supple activity, and no end of endurance in a keen, protracted struggle with an adversary. Remarkable instances of this fierce endurance are to this day commented on, particularly in his memorable bouts with John Richardson of Staffield Hall, "Belted Will" of Caldbeck, and the celebrated bone-setter, George Dennison.

Rowantree was born in the vale of Kingwater, in the year 1779. The place of his birth, and where he continued to reside for a long series of years, is a lonely and sterile region, inhabited chiefly by sheep-farmers, situate between the green woodland slopes of Gilsland, and the then wild unclaimed wastes

of Bewcastle; and was doubtless in the long ago border marauding times the scene of many a bloody raid; and later, too, of many smuggling affrays in getting across the border untaxed whiskey. Maitland's *Complaint* gives a vivid description of the lawlessness prevalent:—

> That nane may keip
> Horse, nolt, nor sheip,
> Nor yet dar sleip,
> For thair mischeifis.

"The lordly halls of Triermaine," in the vale of Kingwater, supplied the title to one of Sir Walter Scott's poems; but the once "lordly halls" are now reduced to a mere fragment.

Like William Jackson of Kinneyside, Rowantree was brought up a shepherd, and followed this pastoral occupation, with scarcely a break in the chain, throughout an extraordinarily prolonged life. He stood fully six feet one inch, his general wrestling weight being fourteen stones. "A lang-feàc't, strang, big-limb't man, carryin' varra lile flesh on his beàns," was the description given of Rowantree by a brother athlete, who, like himself, had carried off the head prize once from the Carlisle ring.

Litt speaks of him as attached to loose holds, and as being an extremely awkward customer to get at. It cannot be said that he was a quick, good, scientific wrestler, being too strong limbed and heavily built throughout, for excelling in these requisites. Nevertheless, he had tremendous powers

when he could get them set agoing in full swing. His famous cross-buttocks in the Carlisle and other rings, which made men fly upwards, like a bull tossing dogs, are spoken of to this day. When young, like many another, Rowantree was such an enthusiastic follower of the wrestling ring, that he frequently went on foot twenty miles to wrestle in the evening for a common leather belt, not worth eighteen pence.

He won his first prize at "Mumps Ha'," Gilsland, at that time a noted hedge ale-house, whereat border farmers—most of them nothing loth to spend a jovial hour or two when happening to meet a neighbour—used to stop and refresh themselves with a "pint" or two, and enjoy a "good crack." The hostelry was at that time kept by a daughter of old Margaret Teasdale, immortalized as "Mumps Meg," in Sir Walter Scott's *Guy Mannering*.

Rowantree afterwards attended some sports at Stanners Burn, in North Tyne; and in the final wrestle up, he came against an exceedingly powerful man, named William Ward, a rustic Titan, with a grip like a giant, resident in the neighbourhood. In the previous rounds the stranger from Kingwater had astonished the North Tyners, by disposing of his men without the least difficulty. In the last round, Ward lifted Rowantree clean off his feet, and caused much amusement among the spectators by crying out, whilst holding him in that position: "Hey, lads! See! I can haud him, noo!" No

sooner, however, did Rowantree set foot on *terra firma*, than in an instant the position of the two men was reversed, a sweeping cross-buttock sending Ward's feet "fleein' i' the air," amid loud plaudits—the loser being sadly crestfallen by this unexpected turn of the wheel.

As a general rule, Rowantree did not go far from home to attend wrestling meetings; his principal ground being along the wild tract of Cumberland lying to the north-east of Carlisle. Occasionally, however, he strolled away from Kingwater and the adjoining country. In the year 1810, he had a trip "wid Nanny, the priest' son, o' Haltwhistle, ower th' fells," to try his luck at the noted gathering, known far and wide as "Melmerby Round." Along with the priest's son—a promising youth in his way for "a bit of a spree"—he entered his name. The Haltwhistle youth came to grief in one of the early rounds, being thrown by John Morton of Gamblesby (father to Tom Morton of the Gale); but Rowantree succeeded in working his way through the ring, and carrying off the head prize.

We next come to record worse luck, in a match with Thomas Golightly, a miner, who belonged to the Butts, in Alston town. Rowantree, though a much heavier and taller man, was overmatched by the 'cute Alstonian, and had to succumb to him. Golightly—one of a wrestling family—was a thoroughly all-round, scientific, first-rate wrestler; and though weighing only twelve stones, and

standing five feet nine inches high, gained many head prizes in the neighbourhood of Alston, Workington, and Whitehaven. The match took place probably at Alston sports, then held annually on Easter Monday and Tuesday—on the same days that a two-days main of cocks was fought.

Rowantree attended the first annual wrestling meeting held at Carlisle, September, 1809, and in the first round he threw Thomas Atkinson; in the second, one Younghusband, (who in the previous round had thrown John Rowantree, a brother of Robert.) In the third round, he had to face the celebrated Thomas Nicholson of Threlkeld. The first was a disputed fall; but in the second, Tom was easily victorious. At Carlisle, in 1810, Nicholson again threw him.

Next year, John Richardson of Staffield Hall, near Kirkoswald, gained the second prize on the Swifts. For the first prize, he came against Rowantree, and after one of the most desperate and determined struggles ever seen in any ring, the latter won with a half-buttock, after giving his opponent a shake off the hip. In all the recorded meetings of athletes in the rings of the north, it has seldom happened that the spectators had the gratification of witnessing two men step into the arena, equal in stature and muscular power to Robert Rowantree and John Richardson. The latter stood six feet three inches high, and the former six feet one inch. Both weighed upwards of fourteen stones,

and on stripping, presented remarkable specimens of athletic formation. Armstrong, familiarly known as the "Solid Yak," another gigantic Cumbrian, was also grassed in the same entry, by Rowantree.

At Carlisle, in 1812, when James Scott, the Canonbie man, won, we do not find that Rowantree contended. No record is known to exist, giving the names of those who entered for the prizes, and, therefore, nothing definite can be stated.

The following extract from the *Carlisle Journal*, will show that the prize—twenty guineas—given in 1813, was held to be something remarkable in wrestling annals, and created a wide-spread sensation throughout the north. At the present day, a considerably larger sum is given; but whether this profuse liberality has improved the *morale* of the ring, is a very doubtful matter.

On Friday, the 8th of October, the great prize of twenty guineas was wrestled for on the Swifts, in a roped ring of seventy yards in diameter, in the presence of the largest concourse of people we ever saw on a similar occasion. Notwithstanding the day was extremely wet during the whole of the contest, the curiosity that had been excited through all ranks of society, overcame every obstacle; and we were happy to see on the ground the Duke of Norfolk, the Marquis of Queensberry, the Earl of Lonsdale, H. Fawcett, Esq., M.P., together with a large number of gentlemen from all parts of the county, and from Scotland, to witness one of the finest exhibitions of activity, muscle, science, and resolution, ever seen in the north of England. The wrestling was of the most superior kind; many of the combatants having been struck by their antagonists from the ground upwards of five feet.

Robert Rowantree, the Cumberland shepherd, gained the first prize, having thrown the noted William Richardson and George Dennison, in two of the severest struggles we ever saw. We are happy to add that their peaceable and civil deportment to each other has been the subject of much commendation.

On the morning of the wrestling, Rowantree walked from Butterburn, a lone farm-stead, north-east of Gilsland, and fully twenty miles from Carlisle, as the crow flies; and then wrestled through an exceedingly strong ring—a proof of lasting endurance and pluck seldom parallelled. Seventy-two men entered the ring for the head prize; exactly twenty-four more than in the previous year. In the first round, Rowantree threw Joseph Richardson; in the second, James Gibson; in the third, Thomas Gillespie; in the fourth, William Earl of Cumwhitton; in the fifth, George Dennison of Stainton; and in the final fall, William Richardson of Caldbeck.

It is somewhat singular that Rowantree, an enthusiastic follower of wrestling, should not again enter the ring of the Border City, or, indeed, any other ring, where winning might be considered to confer distinction. Soon after achieving at Carlisle, the highest distinction a wrestler can attain, he won his last belt in the same arena where he gained his first one—at "Mumps Ha'," Gilsland. He got the belt without contesting a single fall; no one thinking proper to try the chance of a single tussle with him.

Shepherding was his daily pursuit during the

greater part of a long life; and at times he performed some extraordinary feats of pedestrianism. We regret, however, being unable to give exact data of the time and distances. They would have been interesting additions to his wrestling career. For many years he lived on an extensive sheep farm at Wiley Syke, near Gilsland, with one of his brothers. During the great storm of November, 1807, when the snow drifted in some places to the depth of nine and ten feet, Rowantree's brother John, lost four-score sheep, and at one time upwards of two hundred more were missing. A neighbouring shepherd, named James Coulthard, perished in attempting to fold his sheep in Scott-Coulthard's Waste.

At one time, Rowantree was tempted to enter the service of the Earl of Carlisle, as a game-watcher, on the Naworth Castle estates, and continued to be so occupied "a canny bit."

When more than four-score years old, Rowantree went to live with a relative—Mr. Wanless, of the Bay Horse inn, Haltwhistle—under whose roof he spent the last twelve years of his life; and died there in April, 1873, at the patriarchal age of ninety-four. Some nine or ten months before the latter end—the final closing scene of a long life—he "hed sair croppen in," and was in fact nearly bent double. But previous to that time, his appearance was so fresh and animated, his step so firm and active, his intellect and memory so clear and

retentive, that no stranger would have taken him to be anything like his real age.

While living at Haltwhistle, if the old Kingwater athlete could only manage to fall in with any wrestling, dog-trailing, or hunting, or could get off shooting with a dog and gun, either by himself or in company, he was in the height of his glory. When sitting by the side of a wrestling ring, during this latter period of his life, as an onlooker, it was only natural he should become garrulous, and almost, as a matter of course, cynical in his remarks. "Sec bits o' shafflin' things," he used to say, "git prizes noo-a-days! If they'd been leevin' lang syne, we wad ha' thrown them ower th' dyke!" At other times, when a wrestler had laid down in favour of an opponent, he would exclaim: "Ah! ah! that wullent deà at aw, lads! Theer was neà sec lyin' doon i' my time. It was aw main-strength an' hard wark, than!"

John Stanyan Bigg's rhyme, in the Furness dialect, slightly altered, presents a very apt picture of Robert Rowantree, as a cheerful and hearty old man, verging on ninety years:—

Auld Robin Rowantree was stordy and strang;
Auld Robin Rowantree was six feet lang;
He was first at a weddin', an' last at a fair,
He was t' jolliest of aw, whoiver was there;
For he keep't a lad's heart in his wizzen'd auld skin,
And work'd out his woes as fast as they wer' in;
Ye'd niver believe he'd iver seen trouble,
Tho' at times t' auld fellow was amaist walkin' double.

WILLIAM DICKINSON

OF ALSTON.

ALSTON, the capital of a lead-mining district of East Cumberland, stands very conspicuously perched on the side of a hill, overlooking the river Tyne, which flows eastward through a narrow valley below, on its course to the populous towns of Hexham, Newcastle, and Shields, and is then lost in the German Ocean. The miniature town of Alston has a market cross of the quaintest order, and a main street so "brant" and twisting, that strangers watch with amazement the ascent and descent of any kind of conveyance or vehicle, which may chance to be stirring. As a people, the Alstonians are thoughtful, studious, and intelligent. There are few places in Britain where a healthful class of literature, and general knowledge, are sought after with greater avidity, than by the mining population of the town and neighbourhood.

At one time the district was fruitful in producing good wrestlers. Thomas Lee, the publican, Jemmy Fawcett of Nenthead, powerful John Horsley, Tom and Frank Golightly, William Dickinson, Tom Todd of Knarsdale, and other stars of lesser

magnitude, rose and set in succession. At a period after those enumerated, the neighbouring valley of Weardale was equally celebrated in the production of a whole host of good wrestlers. Among them may be noted, John Milburn, Tom Robson, James Pattinson, John Emmerson, Joseph Allison, and many others. And we can bear testimony to their general conduct in the ring as being eminently praiseworthy.

WILLIAM DICKINSON was born at Spency-croft, near Alston, about the year 1792, and brought up in Alston town. He followed the trade or occupation of a lead miner. In height, he stood five feet ten-and-a-half inches, and weighed fully thirteen stones. In appearance, there was every indication of a stout compact built man, well made from top to toe, with nothing cumbersome about him. He had fine expansive shoulders, good loins, and was rather light built about the limbs. He usually appeared in the ring, dressed in a pair of Cashmere trousers, light coloured stockings, and high tied shoes. Though a great enthusiast at wrestling, Dickinson was generally considered to be indifferent about other recreations, and was rather easy about following his daily occupation very closely. Some of the more pugnacious Alstonians tried various means to get him enlisted among them as a fighter, but in this they were disappointed. "D—n thy snoot!" shouted a jeering comrade to him one day, "thoo can grip a chap's back smart eneuf;

but thoo dārn't hit a body for thy life! Thoo's far ower muckle shoo'der-bund for a trick like that!"

Dickinson's career proved to be exceedingly brief, and few particulars are now remembered respecting him. While still in his teens, he excelled in his own neighbourhood as a strong athlete, and succeeded in carrying off several minor prizes. We cannot learn whether he attended the then noted gatherings at Melmerby or Langwathby. However, in October, 1812, when twenty years old, we find him figuring at a great meeting held at Penrith, where a sum of fifteen guineas, subscribed for by the Earl of Lonsdale, Squire Hasell of Dalemain, and others, was given to contend for. From the first to the third round, Dickinson threw—Thomas Parker of Pallethill, John Nicholson of Threlkeld, and John Harrison of Horrock-wood, and was himself toppled over in the fourth round by some one whose name is not now known. The head prize—ten guineas—was won by John Parker of Sparkgate, and the second by James Lancaster of Catterlan.

In 1813—the following year—Dickinson attended the Carlisle wrestlings, where he attained considerable distinction. For the head prize, he threw Thomas Graham, Robert Forster, and Frank Watson. In the fourth round, he was thrown by Samuel Jameson of Penrith. On the second day, the young Alstonian beat down all opposition, and carried off the chief prize amid great applause. He threw in quick succession, and in a masterly manner

the following men, namely—John Forster, John Hope, Robert Forster, Simon Armstrong, and, in the final fall, John Lowden of Keswick, a really formidable opponent.

In 1814, he attained the highest wrestling distinction, by carrying off the head prize at Carlisle. It was calculated, from the amount of money taken at the gate, that not less than 15,000 people witnessed the wrestling on the Swifts. The meeting was disgraced by one pugilistic encounter, which *did* take place, and by the foreshadowing of another which *did not* take place. It appears a match had been arranged between Carter, a Lancashire man, and one Cooper, both professional boxers. The latter, for some cause or other, did not turn up, and Carter gave an exhibition of pugilistic science, in a large room at the Blue Bell inn, in the presence of the Marquis of Queensberry and a crowd of people, drawn by curiosity to witness the performance.

The fight which *did* take place, was for a purse of thirty-five guineas, between two local men—Tom Ridley, seaman, a native of Carlisle, commonly known as the "glutton," and Tom Nicholson of Threlkeld, wrestler. The battle was fought in a roped ring on the Swifts, used for wrestling. The severe blows dealt by the "glutton," told much in his favour, while Nicholson baffled and punished his opponent materially, by bringing him frequently to mother earth, with a heavy "soss." After the contest had lasted for half-an-hour—the Threlkeld

man being much punished about the head, and Ridley about the body—the constables interfered and put an end to the combat.

We gladly resume our account of the wrestling. Sixty-six men entered the ring, to compete for various prizes. Dickinson came upon the Swifts in excellent trim, looking every inch a man as he stripped for the contest. Although Tom Nicholson, William Richardson, Robert Rowantree, John Earl, and James Scott, failed to put in an appearance, still a good field of dangerous hands met to contend.

In the first and second rounds, Dickinson threw John Baillie and John Routledge; and in the third had a keenly contested struggle with John Watson —a well known athlete in the early annals of the Carlisle ring—and succeeded in throwing him. Among others who came to grief in the third round were Tom Richardson, "the Dyer"—then a stripling in his teens, and Joseph Bird of Holm Wrangle. Turning out as fresh as a lark, in the fourth round, Dickinson grassed William Ward; and in the fifth, James Routledge; the latter of whom had previously done good service by disposing of John Nicholson of Threlkeld, William Earl of Cumwhitton, and Joseph Peart. In the sixth round, the hero of the day was fortunate enough to be odd man; and then at the last faced George Dennison, (who had previously carried off William Slee of Dacre, with a clean hype.) The final fall was a

singular one. "Dennison," says Litt, "threw in his left side with much force, intending to buttock his opponent; Dickinson left go, and Dennison, disappointed of his object, staggered forward a considerable distance, but could not save himself from going down on his hands, otherwise he would have won the fall, as he had preserved his hold."

The head prize—a belt, and eight bright guineas—was then handed to Dickinson, amid much cheering, especially from the Alstonians, and some commotion from the disappointed friends and admirers of Dennison.

After tracing Dickinson's career, until his brow was decked with the green bay of victory, in the foremost wrestling ring of the kingdom, there ensues a sudden collapse. The Carlisle ring of 1814, was probably the last one in which he figured, for afterwards we lose sight of him altogether as a wrestler.

About this date he married Sarah Eals, of Alston, innkeeper, who proved a shrew. Not living happily with her, and being himself a man who loved quietude and peace of mind, more than strife and contention, he left both the neighbourhood and his shrewish partner behind him, somewhat suddenly, and went into Scotland, where he lived for some time employed as a gamekeeper. He afterwards emigrated to America; and although doomed to be an exile from Alston and his native district, it is said he returned again to England, and died many years ago.

GEORGE DENNISON

OF PENRITH.

For more than thirty years—from 1808 to 1840—George Dennison was a well-known character in the north; trusted and esteemed by all classes as a skilful bone-setter, all over Cumberland, Westmorland, and a great part of North Lancashire. Whenever a bad case of broken limbs or dislocated joint befel an unfortunate individual, throughout this wide district, the first move in most cases was either to, "Send for Dennison," or else, "We must go to Penrith."

He succeeded Benjamin Taylor, another distinguished bone-setter, who sprang from New Church in Matterdale. Dennison, we believe, originally entered Taylor's service in the capacity of a servant, and was often called in to assist in holding patients. Being of a shrewd and observant disposition, he picked up many points connected with bone-setting, and soon became very useful to his master. At that time Taylor had a pupil under his charge, as stolid and slow at learning as any one well could be. It was hard work to get anything driven into his dull pate. Taylor often lost temper altogether, and used to exclaim: "Thoo

blinnd divel! thoo can see nowte—nowte at aw; an' theer' tudder chap actually larnin' faster than I larn't mysel'! I can keep nowte frae *him!*"

Dennison practised bone-setting for a life-time, throughout the north, with great success. And by concentrating his skill on one particular branch, he out-distanced the whole of the college-tutored doctors, far and near.

"Cocking" was then a pastime much followed, and Benjamin Taylor's breed of game cocks were noted for their fighting properties. They were, however, (says Professor Wilson,) outmatched when sent over to Westmorland to fight in a main at Elleray. Several of the Dennison family, too, about that date, were likewise great "cockers." William Dennison, uncle to the bone-setter, by trade a nailer, figured conspicuously for several years at the Easter fights held at Alston.

GEORGE DENNISON was born and brought up at Penrith, one of the pleasantest small towns in the north country. In height, he stood five feet nine-and-a-half inches, and weighed fully thirteen stones; all over an athlete in appearance, a compact and well made man. He was an excellent striker with the right leg, effective with the "hench," and clever, also, at hyping. The most successful feat he achieved in the ring, was at Carlisle, in 1814, when he wrestled up with Dickinson of Alston; and at the same meeting, carried off chief prize on the second day. He did not continue to follow

wrestling for any lengthened period, but wisely kept an eye steadily towards the vocation for which he was so eminently fitted.

He figured more as an amateur in the ring than as a professional, especially after the excitable youthful stage was passed. At an early period in the outset of his career, he distinguished himself by throwing the noted John Harrison of New Church, Matterdale, twice in the wrestle up at some neighbouring country sports; and at Morland, in Westmorland, he threw Savage of Bolton, near Appleby, who was at one time looked upon as the don of a wide country-side.

In July, 1812, there was a great gathering at the village of Newbiggin, a place which had become famous for the keen rivalry displayed at its annual wrestling contests. In this year, Armstrong, better known as "Solid Oak," (provincially "Solid Yak,") put in an appearance, and came swaggering into the ring on the village green, boasting he would soon clear the deck for them. On stripping, he presented a gigantic mass of humanity, that certainly looked exceedingly formidable. He stood upwards of six feet, weighed fully eighteen stones, was solidly built from head to foot, and apparently carried no superfluous flesh. But as the Fates would have it, bounce and swagger, height and weight, and amazing strength, all proved of no avail in the scales, for in one of the early rounds, the "Yak tree" was dexterously carried off

by the valiant bone-setter, and grassed amid the loud taunts and jeers of the assembled villagers. At the Penrith gathering, in October following, Dennison, then of Sockbridge, threw David Harrison of New Church, in the first round, and was thrown next time over by Joseph Bellas of Parkhouse.

We have no list to show that Dennison attended the Carlisle meeting in 1812, but the following year his achievements were very creditable. He wrestled successfully, for the head prize, as far as the fifth round, throwing in succession—Robert Cowan, George Young, John Glendinning, and Robert Langhorn, and—after one of the severest struggles on record—was brought to grass by one of Robert Rowantree's slaughtering cross-buttocks. In the second round, two young men, Tom Richardson, "the Dyer," and George Forster—one of three brothers, all wrestlers—were drawn together. The "Dyer" buttocked his opponent, and, in the fall, Forster unfortunately had his shoulder dislocated. Dennison being in attendance, there was no need to send for any bungling practitioner, or even to convey the sufferer off the Swifts. The work of setting the shoulder to rights, in the presence of 12,000 wondering spectators, was not of long duration, and the operation so successfully performed, that Forster could hardly be restrained from trying his luck for the minor prize.

On the second day, at Carlisle, Dennison, in the second round, threw George Little, a clever scientific

wrestler, but immediately after, had to succumb to the superior strength and weight of John Lowden of Keswick.

In 1814, Dennison made his last and most successful appearance in the Carlisle ring. He had worked himself through the three first rounds, for the head prize, without meeting with anything like a dangerous rival. In the fourth, he came against his fellow-townsman, Samuel Jameson, a cartwright, considered to be one of the best of his trade in the county. He was a strong, bony, five feet ten man, an extremely dangerous customer to deal with. His fame as a wrestler has, however, been totally eclipsed by that of his son, William Jameson, the champion of a later period. Having successfully disposed of Jameson, Dennison next came in contact with another equally good man, in the person of William Slee of Dacre, and proved again victorious. The next and final struggle occurred with William Dickinson of Alston. A reference to a description of the fall, a few pages back, in Dickinson's memoir, will show how the head prize was lost to Dennison, by the merest accidental slip on his part.

Having missed first honours, he resolved to fight hard and perseveringly for the second prize. This was won bravely. Only eighteen wrestlers entered the ring, and the men who competed in the last two rounds, with the victor, were Joseph Peart and Francis Wilson, the latter named being second.

After the year 1814, Dennison—then about thirty years old—determined to bid farewell to the wrestling ring, excepting sometimes trying an odd bout when officiating in the capacity of umpire. An increasing profession engrossed his attention, and he began to stick more assiduously to it. It is not often that talent is hereditary, but in the Dennison family it proved to be eminently so. His sons, George, John, and Joseph, have all distinguished themselves in the same honourable vocation.

The cures that Dennison wrought in bone-setting were numerous and effective, and it is almost needless to remark, conferred more honour and distinction on him than any success gained in the wrestling arena. One remarkable cure may be mentioned; and as it was wrought on one of our most renowned wrestlers, it will fit in appropriately. Richard Chapman, when between ten and eleven years old, had a thigh bone badly broken. As a matter of course, Dennison was sent for, and the cure effected was simply perfection. Any one seeing the fine elastic form and marvellous activity of Chapman, would hardly imagine or give credence to the fact, that a few years before he had had a broken thigh bone. George Dennison, sitting or standing, as the case might be, among the multitude round a wrestling ring, and delightedly witnessing the Patterdale champion, tossing about his opponents like shuttlecocks, with a science and activity

rarely paralleled, used to exclaim, in the well understood vernacular of the north: "Leùk, lads, leùk! Theer' yan o' my cures of a brokken thie'!"

At the Keswick annual sports, held in Crow Park, in 1833, a somewhat singular coincidence occurred—the meeting of two athletes, and both of them indebted to Dennison for being able to appear. John Spedding of Egremont, a clever wrestler, and Richard Chapman, were called together. Now, it so happened, the former had had a dislocated hip-joint set to rights by Dennison, just about the same time the accident occurred to the latter. Some little excitement was caused by these two stripping into the ring in perfect form, when they doubtless presented a gratifying spectacle to the skilful bone-setter, who was among the throng of onlookers: "Noo, than!" he exclaimed, "leùk at my tweà men. I'll bet on brokken thie'-beàn, ageàn hip-joint!" His opinion was quickly corroborated. "Thie'-beàn" won cleverly, and afterwards disposed of John Nichol of Bothel, a formidable opponent, in the final fall, for the head prize. The winner then went to Greystoke, and won both the wrestling and high jumping; a neighbouring squire asserting: "Upon my word, Chapman can jump higher than any horse I have!"

Twenty years or more had elapsed, since Dennison and William Richardson of Caldbeck, had been brought to grief, in the Carlisle ring, by the

Kingwater champion, Rowantree,—when they met by chance at Springfield, on the road between Penrith and Keswick. The latter was returning homewards from Patterdale sheep fair. It so happened that both were rather "fresh i' drink." Nothing would do but they must have a fall or two. Each got one, when Dennison complained his arm was lamed. One of the byestanders, chaffing him, said: "It maks neà matter, Gwordie, aboot *thy* arm! If it *is* brokken, thoo can seùn set it ageàn, thoo knows!"

The two veterans chatted over old times, and Dennison working himself up to boiling point, in reference to the Carlisle wrestling of 1813, exclaimed: "Wully! we sud beàth been weel bray't aw t' way heàm, for lettin' greit Robin Row'ntree fell us. Confoond the numskull! Efter he'd carriet me off, I dūd think 'at thoo wad ha' stopt his gallop for him!"

George Dennison—justly regretted throughout the north—died May, 1840, aged fifty-five years.

JAMES ROBINSON

OF HACKTHORPE.

CARLISLE, the principal, the most influential and attractive wrestling ring in Cumberland and Westmorland, and the Lowther family—the leading one of the two counties—were for a considerable period closely allied. William, Earl of Lonsdale, was a most munificent patron of the ring, from its commencement in 1809, and for fully a quarter of a century afterwards. On several occasions, this nobleman subscribed the sum of twenty guineas, the full amount of prizes then given at the Border city; besides holding meetings at Clifton, near Lowther, and other places, for the entertainment of his guests. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that his gamekeepers, wood-foresters, hinds, grooms, and other domestics, should be sometimes found practising the art and mystery of buttocking, hyping, swinging, and back-heeling, on sunny evenings in summer, under the shadow of some stately oak or sycamore, in the park surrounding Lowther Castle.

Of JAMES ROBINSON, one of the Earl of Lonsdale's gamekeepers, we have not been able to glean many particulars. He was a stout built, muscular man, rather low set, stood about five feet ten inches

high, and weighed fully fourteen stones. He became a clever and effective buttocker; but excelled, we understand, more in defence, and as a stiff sturdy stander in the ring, than from any great amount of science he possessed.

The earliest mention of Robinson, as a wrestler, which we can find, occurs at the great gathering at Penrith in 1812. In the first round there, he threw one J. Graham of Thomas Close, but owing to imperfect reporting, his name does not appear again in the list.

In 1815, the Committee of the Carlisle wrestling ring circulated the following advertisement throughout Cumberland, Westmorland, and the northern counties:—

TWENTY GUINEAS.—To be Wrestled for at the Carlisle Races, on Wednesday, the 4th of October, 1815, the sum of Twenty Guineas, in the following Prizes:—First Prize, £8. 8. 0. (He that wrestles the last fall with the winner to receive £1. 1. 0.) Every wrestler, who throws his man in the first wrestle, will be permitted to contend for the second class of prizes, with the exception of the winner of the first prize, in whose place a wrestler will be chosen by the Clerk, to make the dividing number even.

Second Prizes:—First, £4. 4. 0.; Second, £2. 2. 0.; Third, £1. 11. 6.; Fourth, £1. 11. 6.; Fifth, 10s. 6d.; Sixth, 10s. 6d.; Seventh, 10s. 6d.; Eighth, 10s. 6d.

No person to be permitted to contend for any of the above prizes, unless he enrols his name with the Clerk, on the Swifts, before ten o'clock in the morning of the said 4th of October next, as the wrestling will commence precisely at that hour. Any person making the least disturbance, or attempting to force the ring, will be taken into custody, as

constables will be specially appointed for that purpose. All disputes to be determined by Joseph Richardson, Esq., umpire.

The weather during the races proved exceedingly favourable, and the ground was in excellent condition. A greater concourse of people assembled than had been seen for years. The leading families of the two counties were represented. There were the Lowthers, the Vanes, the Grahams of Netherby and Edmund Castle, the Broughams, the Salkelds, the Crackenthorpes, the Senhouses, the Briscoes, the Hasells, the Wyberghs, and others.

Sixty-eight men entered the wrestling ring to contend for the principal prize. Included in the list were a fair sprinkling of old veterans, and a whole bevy of young aspirants of considerable promise; namely, Robinson of Hackthorpe, (his first appearance, we believe,) William Slee of Dacre, Tom Todd of Knarsdale, Tom Richardson—"the Dyer," Joe Abbot of Thornthwaite-hall, Andrew Armstrong of Sowerby-hall, Thomas Peat of Blencow, Thomas Armstrong, the "yak tree," and the three Forsters of Penton, being among the number.

Robinson entered the ring in excellent spirits, and threw his men generally very cleanly and cleverly. In the first round, he gained an easy victory over John Copley. The next time over, in coming against Armstrong, the "yak tree," all his activity and skill had to be brought into play, before the compressed mass of eighteen stones could be

brought to grass. In the third round, he toppled over Edward Forster of Penton, in capital style; and, in the fourth round, James Richardson of Hesket-New-Market, brother to "the Dyer." The fifth time over, George Forster, another of the Penton brothers, (who had thrown Tom Todd in the previous round,) came quickly to grief, under the gamekeeper's brisk fire. Up to this point the Hackthorpe man had shown some really good play; but, says the *Carlisle Patriot*, before the final struggle commenced, Robinson and William Slee of Dacre had agreed to divide the first prize between them, so that they only played for honour. The "honour" of carrying off the head prize then fell to Robinson's share.

On New Year's day, 1816, the annual meeting at Langwathby was numerously attended. A contributor to one of the local papers says:—"Most of the distinguished wrestlers of Cumberland and Westmorland were on the ground, and there never was displayed more skill in the art of wrestling than on this occasion. James Robinson, the noted champion, who won the first prize at Carlisle races, was also successful at Langwathby, and we think he bids fair to excel any man in the kingdom, in this species of amusement. He is a strong-boned, athletic man, but not tall. Before the wrestling commenced, considerable bets were made: the east against the west side of the Eden, which was won by the latter. The purse contended for, was

two guineas. It is intended next year to give a much larger sum, as Langwathby is likely to become a distinguished place for wrestling, being situated in a neighbourhood abounding in first-rate players."

In October, 1816, Robinson again attended the Carlisle meeting. Owing to being the victor of the previous year, a high chair was placed for him to sit upon, from which elevated position he commanded an uninterrupted view of the various falls. Entering his name among the contending parties, he threw Joseph Batey, in the first round; Joseph Brown, in the second; and William Rome in the third round. Coming against a miller, named William Clark—"a tight built lal fellow"—from Hesket-New-Market, in the fourth time over, Robinson was very adroitly brought to the ground, amid the deafening cheers of the assembled crowd. No sooner had Clark achieved this unexpected feat, than he created much laughter by marching up to the place of honour, with a dignified swagger, saying, as he sat down: "I think I's fairly entitled tiv a seat i' t' chair, noo, when I've thrown the greit champion!"

The wrestling at Carlisle in 1817, was held in Shearer's Circus—and not on the Swifts as previously—when James Robinson, Tom Todd, John Mc.Laughlan, and John Liddle, were looked upon as the principal champions. As it turned out, however, Mc.Laughlan stalked through the ring an easy victor, none of the other three mentioned

being able to make any headway against the enormous reach and height of the Dovenby giant. This is the last record known to us of the Hackthorpe gamekeeper as a wrestler.

Robinson has been described by those who knew him, as a sturdy bullet-headed sort of fellow, whose ideas seldom soared above the velveteen coat and corduroy-trouser order of mortals; a rare hand at either creating a row or quelling one; probably more accustomed to the former than the latter. Nevertheless, he is still remembered in his capacity of gamekeeper, as being an active and trustworthy servant to the Earl of Lonsdale: a terror to all midnight prowlers and others addicted to trespassing among the game preserves at Lowther. He took a prominent part in suppressing a riot among the navvies employed in making the new road near Lowther, about 1818 or 1819.

As Robinson advanced in years, intemperate habits appear to have gained upon him; and for some time he led an irregular, harum-scarum sort of life. He either possessed an estate, or had some interest in one, at Hackthorpe, near Lowther, which he sold, and then foolishly set to work and squandered the money. Ultimately, he became reduced to considerable destitution, and at times fell into such sad states of despair, that one can easily conceive of similar thoughts passing through his mind, to those embodied in Miss Powley's pathetic ballad, "The Brokken Statesman":—

O, the fule rackle days! when in wild outwart ways,
I spent time but i' daftness, wi' raff an' expense.
Then the auld land's neglect, an' my friends' lost respect,
While I scworned to tek counsel—I ne'er rued but yence!

. . . . .

When drink hed browt sorrow—fresh money to borrow,
Wi' deep debt o' the riggin', puir crops o' the hill;
Wi' life at the barest, heart sorrow fell sairest;
Yet e'en then I thowt—Cummerland caps them aw still.

In November, 1834, James Robinson was found drowned in Armathwaite bay, eight or nine miles from Penrith, and about the same distance from Carlisle. The waters being very full at the time, it was presumed he had missed his way in the dark, and fallen into the river Lowther, near Brougham —a tributary of the Eden. An inquest was held upon the body, but no evidence appeared to the jurors as to how or by what means he was drowned. At the time of this unfortunate event, Robinson was forty-five years old.

THOMAS RICHARDSON

OF HESKET-NEW-MARKET.

THOMAS RICHARDSON, commonly known as "the Dyer," one of thirteen children, was born at Caldbeck, about the year 1796, and brought up in the neighbouring village of Hesket-New-Market, situate between Penrith and Wigton.

Richardson's father held situations at Rose Castle, under Bishops Vernon and Goodenough. The latter prelate, taking an interest in the welfare of young Richardson, sent him to be educated, under the Rev. John Stubbs, formerly master of Sebergham grammar school; a man of considerable classical attainments, and of a very jovial disposition. The bishop intended his *protégé* for the Church; and, to attain such distinction, most of our readers will be aware, was the anxious hope of many middle-class families in Cumberland and Westmorland. In this case, the wish and aspiration were destined not to bear fruit. The lad steadily rejected all offers of advancement in that direction, his own oft expressed wish being to be brought up to husbandry, and to excel as an athlete. While the father and mother were not averse to his following agricultural pursuits, they were strongly

against his wrestling proclivities. Whenever such gatherings were attended, the youngster had to "slipe off" unknown to his parents.

On arriving at maturity, Richardson developed into a fine manly-looking man, standing five feet eleven inches high, and weighing from thirteen to thirteen-and-a-half stones, with broad massive chest, good length of arm, and strongly built throughout. In the ring, he excelled greatly at hyping, and if this chanced to miss, generally followed up with the "ham."

The question has often been asked, how Richardson came to be familiarly spoken of as "the Dyer." It occurred after this manner. In the parish of Caldbeck, there happened to be several families, at one time, of the same name. This rendered it necessary to distinguish them by such appellations as "Fiddler Richardson," "Dyer Richardson," and "oald Jwohn Richardson"—the last named being "Belted Will's" father. John Richardson, Tom's grandfather, was a dyer at Caldbeck, and became much famed for his *blue* dyes. At that time, blue-and-white checked shirts were generally worn in country districts, by middle and lower class persons; and the women donned blue linen aprons, and blue linsey skirts. These now disused and durable fabrics, were manufactured extensively at Ulverston, Kendal, and, on a lesser scale, at many other places in the north. It was a *sine qua non* that the blue colours should be "fast."

John Richardson served his apprenticeship in Kendal, under the Wakefields, and was there during the rebellion of "'45." When the first section of the Pretender's army retreated northwards through Kendal, it was market-day, and as a matter of course, a multitude of people were collected together, who mobbed the rear-guard of the troops. During the excitement which prevailed, one of Wakefield's dyers seized a gun belonging to a Highlander, and boldly and determinedly wrenched it from his grasp. This only proved the forerunner of more direful onslaughts. As the rebels were turning down the Fish-market, a musket shot fired from a window above, brought one of them lifeless from his horse, and two others were taken prisoners. Being thus provoked, the Highlanders turned about and fired on the multitude. A farmer, named John Slack, of New Hutton, was killed in the open street; and a shoemaker, and an ostler, were seriously wounded. When the Duke of Cumberland's army had passed through Kendal, John Richardson—having proved himself a trustworthy servant—was decorated with a cockade, and employed to carry despatches between the Wakefields and Colonel Honeywood, who was wounded in the skirmish on Clifton Moor, near Penrith.

In after life, Tom Richardson's father kept an inn, and the *blue* flag which floated over his tent at wrestling and other meetings, was the means of indicating his whereabouts to friends and customers.

In the year 1813, when Richardson was about seventeen years old, he felt a strong desire to attend the races and wrestling at Carlisle. His father being much against the outing, some bickering took place between them. However, after breakfast, on the morning of the races, watching his opportunity, the lad slipped out unseen, and had to run part of the way, in order to be in time—the full distance to the border city being something like thirteen miles. Reaching Carlisle, he succeeded in getting his name entered for the head prize. This effected, he was soon called out against Joseph Slack of Blencow, a skilful wrestler, but getting past the meridian. After an exciting tussle, the youngster proved victorious. Next time over, he met George Forster of Denton, and buttocked him cleverly. Forster's shoulder was unfortunately put out in the fall, but set again quickly, as described in the sketch of George Dennison's career. In the third round, Richardson's further progress was cut short by one Robert Langhorn. Our youthful aspirant for fame, then entered for the second day's prize, but was thrown in the second round, by Simon Armstrong.

The following year—1814—he again attended the Carlisle wrestling, and met with about similar success as before. For the head prize, Samuel Jameson of Penrith disposed of him in the third round. In the second day's entry, William Slee of Dacre did the same in the first round.

In 1815, the "Dyer" appeared in the Carlisle ring for the third time. He threw Andrew Armstrong of Sowerby-hall, in the second round; and was thrown next time over by Tom Todd of Knarsdale, near Alston. For the second day's prize, he disposed in succession of his neighbour, William Clark, the miller, Joe Abbot of Thornthwaite-hall, and Robert Forster of Denton; and was brought to grief by Edward Forster, a brother of the last mentioned.

The weather at the Carlisle meeting held in September, 1816, turned out to be extremely wet and uncomfortable, on both first and second days. As a natural consequence, there was a much thinner attendance than ordinary. The Earl of Lonsdale, the Marquis of Queensberry, Sir Philip Musgrave, and others of the nobility and neighbouring gentry, were present; but after the first day, scarcely any equipages, and very few ladies, were to be seen on the course. There was a fair average of good men entered; but the account we have to give of the wrestling is conflicting and unsatisfactory, presenting a finish lame and impotent in the extreme.

In the first and second rounds, Richardson was called out against John Earl of Cumwhitton, and John Weightman, respectively. He succeeded in throwing both of these formidable antagonists. The former was an old veteran in the Carlisle ring, and the latter a powerful young man of twenty-one, with an eventful career before him. In the fourth

round, Richardson and Joseph Graham were drawn together, and had an unsatisfactory bout. Respecting this fall, Litt says: "Being a spectator that year, we do not hesitate to say that the conduct of the umpires was extremely blameable. In the course of the wrestling, a fall between Thomas Richardson of Hesket, and Joseph Graham from Ravenglass, was given to the former. We assert that Graham was not allowed a fair hold, that it was a manifest snap, and after all it was a complete dog-fall. On wrestling when there were but four standers, Richardson was indisputably thrown; but such was the gross partiality shown towards him, that he was allowed to compound with the person who threw him." Disposing of George Coulthard, in the fifth round, Richardson was then called against Tom Todd of Knarsdale, to wrestle the final fall.

As a somewhat different statement has been sent abroad in *Wrestliana*, we think it only right that the "Dyer's" own plea should be set forth. Well, after Todd and he had stood fronting one another, in the ring, for some time, but had not been in holds, "'turney" Pearson called Richardson to one side, and offered him a considerable sum of money if he would only take his coat, go out of the ring, and say he "dārrent russel," or he "dudn't want to russel." To this proposal, Richardson indignantly replied: "No! I'll nowder deà sec a like thing for yee, nor nivver a man i' Carel toon!" It

was currently reported, by the way, that Pearson had bet a good deal Todd would win the prize.* After some further squabbling, a row took place, and the ring was completely broken up.

It was then given out that the two men were to wrestle next morning—the following day being Thursday. When Thursday morning, however, came, the meeting was put off till next morning. When Friday came, it was again put off, on account of the great fight between Carter and Oliver, at Gretna. Richardson stayed three whole days in Carlisle, over the affair, and never received a penny! Whatever "gross partiality" might be shown towards him in wrestling through the ring, he seems only to have fared badly in the end. Let those who can, answer for the treatment he received. The second prize advertised by the Carlisle wrestling committee, curiously enough, was not contended for at all; why so, was best known to the committee themselves.

During the years 1817-18-19-20, there was no wrestling at Carlisle, in connection with the races.

* Henry Pearson, solicitor, was a rare upholder of wrestling, but too much given to betting to do full justice to all parties. It was currently reported he ventured so large a sum on Carter at the Gretna fight, that when Oliver was likely to win during the earlier rounds, he evinced a state of the greatest nervousness imaginable. An old stager has a distinct recollection of him as he stood "fumlen wid his fingers iv his mooth," betraying the nervous "twitch" peculiar to men undergoing great mental excitement, and looking as if he might have gone off at any moment like touchwood or tinder.

The proprietor of a circus certainly filled up the gap creditably, in 1817; but the three remaining years following were entire blanks.

At the Langwathby annual Rounds, held on New Year's day, in 1818, Richardson carried off the head prize of two guineas, finally throwing John Dobson of Cliburn.

While wrestling seemed altogether defunct at Carlisle, it was taken up with renewed vigour at Keswick. In August, 1818, the head prize offered was a purse of five guineas, which brought a great gathering of spectators, and all the best athletes of the day. The onlookers had the gratification of witnessing many keenly contested falls. The last two standers were Richardson, and William Wilson of Ambleside, then just coming out. Before going into the ring for the final struggle, some chaffing took place, the "Dyer" saying to Wilson in a swaggering sort of way, "I'll throw thee, noo, thoo'll see, like I threw t' last chap!" After a good deal of higgling, on Richardson's part, about wanting a "good hod," the two men finally closed, and Wilson being impatient to be at work at once, lifted his opponent to hype him, but missed his stroke. Some manœuvring then took place, and the "Dyer" having materially improved his hold, threw in the "ham" quickly, and curiously enough succeeded in bringing over his dangerous rival, in the very manner he had "bragged" of doing.

In answer to a paragraph which appeared in

the *Cumberland Pacquet*, Richardson issued the following notice :—

SPORTING ADVERTISEMENT.—Thomas Richardson, who won the principal prize at the last Keswick Regatta and Races, having observed it mentioned in the Whitehaven paper of the first instant, that he refused to "play again with the man he threw, for five guineas, though challenged," begs to contradict such statement, as being a gross falsehood ; and he is sorry such an offer was not made to him.—He now challenges his opponent, alluded to in the Whitehaven paper, to wrestle him for ten guineas, at any time or place.—Hesket-New-Market, Sept. 2nd, 1818.

As this match never came off, it is impossible to say what the result might have been ; nevertheless, we have strong leanings to the belief that the "Dyer" would have gained nothing, at that date, by coming into personal contact with Wilson, the best of five falls. As a hyper, the "Dyer" was admirable, and dangerous, too, among even the best Cumbrian wrestlers ; but, in this particular respect, he was far behind Wilson in quickness of stroke and brilliancy of execution.

On one of the days after the races at Keswick, Richardson had a match with Tom Lock of Ravenglass, and threw him cleverly.

Some years after, the "Dyer" rambled away from home as far as Low Wood, to attend the annual wrestlings at Windermere. For some reason or other, he entered his name "Thomas Porter," and passed quietly through two or three of the earlier rounds as an unknown hand. Being called against

Joe Abbot of Bampton, the latter bounced into the ring very full of stopping the further progress of the stranger. No sooner had they approached one another, than Joe opened his eyes very wide, stood as one petrified for a moment, and then exclaimed, "D—n! it's *thee*, Dyer, is it!" The two then took hold, but Joe made no effort towards getting the fall, and "Thomas Porter" obtained fall after fall until he succeeded, we understand, in carrying off the belt.

Liberal prizes for wrestling and other sports were given at Greystoke Castle, by the Howards, and the meetings were always well attended by the nobility and the neighbouring gentry. Richardson won there one year, William Earl of Cumwhitton wrestling second.

A close acquaintance existed between Richardson and Weightman. The former was master at the beginning of their career, but afterwards the latter became too powerful for him. In all they met eleven times, and out of that number of falls, Weightman scored six, and Richardson five. Among other places, the latter threw the Hayton champion at one of the Kirkoswald "worchet" meetings, and got the compliment returned at Wreay soon after, where the fallen man lamed his side.

Sitting among the crowd that lined the Carlisle ring one year, the "Dyer" was called out against a big, raw-boned fellow, an awkward-looking customer, but one, nevertheless, who appeared young

and inexperienced. "What's t'e gāen to mak' o' yon 'an, Tom?" asked Weightman. "Oh," replied the "Dyer," in a tone of mock humility, "I's just gāen to fell him reet off hand, an' than he can gā heàm till his mudder, pooar lad!"

On another occasion, he was called out against Wilfrid Wright, at a meeting on Penrith fell. "Noo, Wiff," said he, "I's gāen to throw thee streight into yon furrow yonder!" and did so cleverly. When Wright had recovered from his astonishment, and was gathering himself up, he exclaimed: "Cush, man! I dudn't think thoo cud ha' deùn't hofe sa clean!"

Richardson continued to wrestle for many years, in the Carlisle and other rings, with moderate success. Later on, he lived at Penrith with a sister, who kept an inn there. When approaching fifty years old, he became so overgrown, that his weight appeared to be seventeen or eighteen stones, forming a marked contrast to what he was a quarter of a century before—then a lish, active, thirteen-stone man.

He died at Penrith, about the year 1853.

TOM TODD

OF KNARSDALE.

Tom Todd, a Northumbrian by birth, was born and brought up at "The Bogg," in Knarsdale, near Alston, where his father was well known as a sheep breeder. He stood fully five feet ten inches high; his general wrestling weight being about twelve stones and a half. Todd's contemporaries have spoken of him as a most accomplished and scientific wrestler. He could buttock cleanly, hype quickly, and excelled in most other chips. Weighing and watching his opponents' movements narrowly, he seemed to anticipate what was coming, and prepared accordingly, both for stopping and chipping. In taking hold, like most good wrestlers, he stood square and upright; but in consequence of having a very peculiarly shaped back, like half a barrel, it was next to impossible to hold him easily, or to grip him with any amount of firmness. Like Richard Chapman, he could always "get out," if so minded, at starting.

About the summer of 1810 or 1811, Tom Todd, then just merging into manhood, attended the annual "boon" mowing-meeting of John Bell of

Kirkhaugh, the noted bone-setter, where as many as twenty or thirty strong men often congregated together. When the grass had been cut down, it was usual to broach a barrel of ale, and drink the contents on the green sward. During the time the nut-brown home-brewed was being handed round, the Alston band enlivened the scene with music; and then followed the most attractive part of the day's programme, namely, dog-trailing, jumping, and wrestling. At this rural festival Tom Todd won his first belt; and a lad, named Robin Carruthers, a farm servant, from the Bewcastle district, wrestled second.

In 1815, Todd figured in the Carlisle ring, probably for the first time; and came against Tom Richardson, the dyer, in the third round for the principal prize. Being both young men, and not unequally matched in size, strength, and science, they had three desperate tussles before the struggle could be decided. Finally, the fall ended in favour of Todd. In the fourth round, Todd's career was cut short by George Forster of Penton.

In contending for the second prize, Todd threw a clever wrestler, named Thomas Peat, a farmer's son, from Blencow, in the third round; and Armstrong, the "yak tree," in the fourth. Not being able to come to terms about holds, in the final fall, with Edward Forster of Penton, the two never wrestled out, but, says Litt, in dividing the money for first and second, Todd received more money

than his opponent, it being the opinion of the umpire that he was the fairer stander.

Todd made his appearance again in the Carlisle wrestling ring of 1816, where he played a conspicuous part. Meeting with no one particularly worthy of being called a dangerous competitor in the first five rounds, he went through with considerable ease, throwing in rotation, James Johnson, R. Armstrong, J. Scott, T. Hodgson, and William Clark of Hesket-New-Market. After the fifth round, the only two men left standing were Todd and Richardson, the dyer; and the fall which ought to have been decided between them, resulted in nothing but discreditable quarrelling and ill feeling. A fuller account of this unpleasant affair will be found in the sketch of Thomas Richardson's career. Todd's friends, as a natural consequence, thought that he was the better man, and ought to have won. Todd himself, after the event, seemed to be under a bond of secrecy on the subject. We have no desire to sully his memory, with the charge of a settled determination not to go to work with equal holds. We do not wish to twit him with taking a mean advantage of his opponent, in order to deprive him of the chance of a fair contest. We believe he had a soul above such an unwarrantable proceeding. It will, probably, be nearer the mark to say, he acted unwisely and unbecomingly, by conniving with his principal backer, as the sequel will show.

Todd's usual remark was—when the subject chanced to be broached and discussed—that Richardson's backers pressed him very much to "lay down," which he declined most definitely to do. But a week or two before his death, a far more disagreeable fact oozed out. He then acknowledged, to an intimate friend, mentioned hereafter —whom he rescued at the Gretna fight—that he received *half the money*, offered for the head prize, in 1816. This, of course, was paid through the agency of one of the principal promoters of the Carlisle ring, in a left-handed manner, with an understanding that it should never be made public!

About two years after the dishonourable act narrated, had broken up the annual wrestling at Carlisle, Todd used to tell of meeting Richardson, in the third round at some village sports, where he threw him easily.

After this—and during the discontinuance of the popular gathering on the Swifts, for three years—we know nothing of Todd's career as a wrestler, until the Carlisle Meeting of 1822, when he again made a gallant but unsuccessful struggle to carry off the head prize. Being engaged as a gamekeeper, in the service of the Earl of Carlisle, on the Naworth Castle estates, he entered himself under the assumed name of "John Moses of Alston." Todd displayed considerable science and activity in the course of the day, and distinguished himself much and deservedly, by throwing several

dangerous hands, among whom may be especially mentioned, John Fearon of Gilcrux, seventeen stone weight, John Liddle of Bothel, a fourteen-and-a-half stone man, (winner of the head prize at Keswick, a few weeks previously, where he finally disposed of William Cass of Loweswater)—and Robert Watters of Carlisle, a light weight, but an accomplished scientific wrestler. In the final fall, however, with Cass, the cup of success was again dashed from his lips. This time the weight—sixteen stones—and strength of the Loweswater champion, proving too much for twelve-and-a-half stones.

Scarcely had the cheers died away which greeted the West Cumberland man's victory, when Louis Nanny of Haltwhistle—an enthusiastic frequenter of wrestling rings—offered to back the Knarsdale man in a match against Cass for a hundred pounds. Todd thought this sum too much to risk even handed, against such a powerful antagonist; but was willing to be backed, and contend at all hazards, for half that amount. The two east countrymen, however, had it all their own way, so far as the challenge was concerned. At that time, Cass being new to the Carlisle ring, and almost unknown as a wrestler, no one seemed bold enough to stand forward on his behalf; and, moreover, like a quiet, inoffensive man, he was perfectly content to rest upon the laurels he had just gained.

This year Weightman—"aw ower his oan daft

nonsense"—was thrown by Fearon of Gilcrux, in the first round, for the principal prize at Carlisle. Not being eligible, on this account, for entry in the second day's competition, Tom Todd stood on one side for him; when Weightman, in order to retrieve lost ground, took pains, and threw his men as fast as he came to them. "Talk aboot russlin'!" exclaimed an eye witness, "Wey, man, he just went thro' them like th' wind!"

As time passed on, and Weightman came more prominently to the fore, Tom Todd found himself absolutely nowhere in the giant's grasp; he therefore thought it wiser and more prudent to retire from the ring, without making any further efforts to carry off first honours.

When Todd was a young man, he kept a tight well-made little trail-hound, trained to the name of "Stand back," but which was entered at the different trails as "Towler." Harry Kirkby of Kirkhaugh, the clergyman's lame son, used to tell a tale about Todd and himself taking the hound one year to Melmerby Rounds. When the dogs were coming in, they looked to the spectators, "aw iv a cluster," as they neared the winning post. At this crisis, Todd roared out in a loud voice: "Standback! Standback!" apparently appealing to the crowd, and ran fussing about immediately in front, with his arms flying in the air. "An' dar bon!" said the priest's son, "the dog com' in like stooar, an' wan easily!"

This artful trick has been often practised since, if not earlier than that time, at dog-trails—successfully on more than one occasion by the late Richard Gelderd of Ulverston, a keen dog-trailer. He had a "Standback," and at the Flan and other neighbouring sports, was trained to rush forward to the winning post, when the crowd were ordered in a stentorian voice: "Standback! Standback! an' let t' dogs cum in—can't ye!"

At the great northern fight, between Carter and Oliver, at Gretna, in 1816, John Slack of Carlisle, shoemaker, then a young man in his teens, was thrown to the ground by the surging of the immense crowd, and might easily have been trampled to death. Seeing the impending danger, Tom Todd, and John Barnes, the constable, both powerful men, elbowed their way through the crowd, and succeeded in rescuing the fallen man, before he was seriously injured. On lifting him from the ground, Todd exclaimed, "Marcy, Jwohn! is that thee? My faiks! but thoo'd a narrow squeak for thy life theear!"

Some time after the year 1822, Todd left the north of England, and went into the Highlands of Scotland, where he became gamekeeper to Sir Charles Ross of Belnagowan Castle, Ross-shire, and continued in that capacity for something like twenty-four or twenty-five years.

Returning again to his native district, he settled upon the farm rented by his brother John, at

Moscow, near the fashionable watering-place of Gilsland. A few years before he died, he gradually lost his sight, and at times grew "varra canker't an' twisty." Once when one of these fits was upon him, his denunciation of wrestlers and wrestling rings was hurled about in such unqualified language, that one was apt to think the transgressions committed in the Carlisle ring of 1816, still haunted his waking dreams—not probably for anything done personally, but for being made a cat's-paw at that time, by his principal backer.

In the month of September, 1875, Todd, then in his eighty-fourth year, went to the house door, beckoned to the farm-workers that dinner was ready, and immediately after passed quietly away. From the fact of the Knarsdale athlete having attained this great age—and he was only one of many who did—we may draw pretty conclusive evidence, that the northern pastime of wrestling does not, as a rule, shorten life.

WILLIAM WILSON

OF AMBLESIDE.

SIZE, position, and population considered, it must be allowed that the district of High Furness, in North Lancashire, has produced its fair quota of wrestling celebrities. Foremost comes William Wilson, then Miles Dixon—according to Professor Wilson, "a match for any cock in Cumberland"—his brother James, and Roan and John Long, all men of great stature and power, capable of hurling their opponents

"Off the ground with matchless strength."

These were all natives of the soil. In the early part of the nineteenth century, the wrestlings at the Ferry-on-Windermere, at Backbarrow, Bouth Fair, Finsthwaite, Oxenpark, Arrad Foot Races, and on many other village greens in Furness Fells, were often very keenly contested. Arthur Burns of Ullater, (who suffered from the deadly grip of Roan Long,) James Burns, a younger brother of Arthur's, Roger Taylor of Scathwaite, and John Wren of Bouth, the peatman, were all good wrestlers in their day and generation.

Then came John Harrison of Lowick, sometimes called "Checky," from the colour of his shirt, who

carried off one or two prizes from the Keswick ring in its palmiest days; later in life a landlord at Ulverston; a man of enormous strength, standing fully six feet high, stout limbed, and weighing something like seventeen stones. One feat, forcibly illustrating his uncommon strength, deserves record. During one of the statute fairs, two sturdy country servant men got to fighting in his house at Ulverston. He made no fuss of any kind, but quietly took up one under each arm, and carried them both, vainly struggling to be free, into the middle of the market place; then set them down on their legs, and, giving each a good bang against the other, left them to fight it out. Joseph Jackson of Grizebeck, in Kirkby Ireleth, sickle maker, though barely a twelve-stone man, gained many first prizes, and came off triumphant in a severely contested match with William Bateman of Yottenfews, near Gosforth.

Cannon of Subberthwaite, Robert Casson and Brian Christopherson of Oxenpark, and Marshall, the forgeman, also deserve a passing word of praise, although none of them ever went out of their own neighbourhood to wrestle. Christopherson put forth promising powers at the Ferry and other places, and was highly complimented by Richard Chapman. At the Ferry, he was backed by a local sporting man, in a match with George Donaldson—a single fall—for two pounds; and, to the surprise of a crowd of anxious onlookers, won gallantly. There was little difference in the weight

or height of the winner and the loser. Casson threw Harrison, Cannon, and all comers at Bouth Fair; and Marshall did precisely the same thing at Sparkbridge. On the last occasion, the excitement amongst the spectators became so intense, that the forgeman's progress was urged on after the following primitive fashion: "If thou'll nobbut thrā' Cannon," shouted one, "I'll gi'e the' a pint!" "Thrā' Harrison," roared another, "an' I'll stand the' a quart!" "I think," responded Marshall, with a fine stroke of humour—"I think, I'd better hev summat to be gāen on wi'. It'll mebbe help me to thrā' them *beàth togidder!*"

WILLIAM WILSON was born and brought up at High Wray, a village pleasantly situated on the western banks of Windermere lake. Near to his birthplace there has been erected a lordly baronial residence—Wray Castle—on a beautiful commanding site, overlooking all the higher reaches of Windermere, and forming one of the many attractive objects for sight-seers on the lake. Wilson was a nephew of the Dixons of Grasmere, and was commonly spoken of as "girt Will Wilson," in order to distinguish him from "lile Will Wilson" of Grasmere, or "wicked Will," as the latter was sometimes called, from the bottom and endurance he displayed in frequent pugnacious encounters. It was "lile Will," we believe, who once wrestled up at Bowness, with William Thwaites of Staveley, an eleven-stone

man. They each got a fall. The next one—called by the umpires a dog-fall—was claimed by Thwaites, who, in consequence, refused to wrestle over again. The ring was soon broken up in disorder, and in the *melée* which ensued, Professor Wilson struck Thwaites over the head with his stick, and bulged his hat in. "Did I do that, my lad?" asked Wilson. "Yes," replied Thwaites, "yee did it: I's suèr an' sarten o' that." "Then," said Wilson, "here's a sovereign for wrestling so well. It 'll mebbe help to get thee a new hat."

William Wilson grew up a tall "lathy fellow," standing, when full grown, quite six feet four inches high, straight as a willow-wand and as lithe, and gradually grew until at twenty-two he weighed from fourteen to fifteen stones, with a good reach of arm, and a finely developed muscular frame. As a hyper, or "inside striker," as Litt calls him, he displayed superb form. For three or four years, he stood unmatched and irresistible in this particular stroke, and since his day no man has appeared worth calling a rival to him, except William Jackson of Kinniside. We are now alluding to the "standing hype," or as the author of *Wrestliana* more properly defines it, "inside striking." It is a chip in which a tall wrestler, like Wilson or Jackson, has a great advantage, particularly over shorter opponents. The "swinging hype," in which Chapman, Donaldson, and Longmire were such deadly proficients, is more showy and artistic, consisting of a quick swing

off the breast once round or nearly so, and then a turn over with the knee inside the thigh.

Our information respecting Wilson's career as a wrestler is neither so full nor minute as we could have desired. The probability is that he won his first prize on the banks of his native Windermere, but at what age or under what circumstances is not now known. When a young man, Roan Long and he had a severe bout at Ambleside sports, which ended in Wilson throwing his burly opponent cleverly with the hype.

The first definite notice, however, we have of him as an athlete was at the Keswick Regatta and Races in 1818, being at that time about twenty-two years old. While the Carlisle ring, on the Swifts, was closed for the space of four years, the wrestling in the Crow Park, Keswick, assumed an importance which it could scarcely otherwise have attained. In fact, for a time it was justly entitled to be considered the leading and most important wrestling gathering in the north. In aid of this distinction, there then existed on all sides of the metropolitan lake town, a numerous array of very distinguished athletes. Mr. Pocklington of Barrow House, was the chief supporter of the regatta and races at that date, and his personal exertions to promote the permanent establishment and success of these meetings were unceasing.

In the year 1818, some remarkably good play took place in the wrestling ring. The two most

successful competitors were in excellent "fettle," namely, Tom Richardson and William Wilson. The latter gathered his men quickly and cleanly, and threw them as fast as he came to them. Coming against Richardson in the final fall, he lifted him from the ground with the intention of hyping, but failing to hold his man firmly, the Dyer turned in, and, after a considerable struggle, managed to bring him over with the buttock. After this tussle, Wilson always spoke of Richardson as being "swine back't," meaning thereby that his back was extremely slippery and difficult to hold, from the nature of its peculiar roundness.

In the year 1819, Wilson carried off the head prize for wrestling, and a handsome belt, at the Ferry Regatta, Windermere. We have no account of the other competitors at this meeting.

Wilson attended the Keswick gathering of the same year, for the second time, and it proved memorable above all others in his wrestling career, stamping him as "the best wrestler Westmorland ever produced." Many dispassionate judges at this time held the opinion, that this eulogium might be extended also to the neighbouring northern county. We have no doubt, if he had continued a healthy man, this verdict would have been confirmed over and over again. Although he did not succeed in winning the chief prize this year, he nevertheless distinguished himself ten times more than the victor who did, by throwing the man with whom no one

else had the shadow of a chance. We refer to his struggle with John Mc. Laughlan of Dovenby, more than two inches taller than Wilson, and at that time five or six stones heavier.

As a prelude to this fall, Clattan took hold of Wilson in the middle of the ring, in a good natured sort of way, and lifted him up in his arms to show how easily he could hold him. No sooner was he set down, than Wilson threw his arms around Clattan's waist, and lifted him in precisely the same way, a course of procedure which greatly amused the spectators. After these preliminaries had been gone through, the two men were not long in settling into holds, each having full confidence in his own powers and his own mode of attack. A few seconds, however, decided the struggle of these two modern Titans. No sooner had each one gripped his fellow, than quick as thought, Wilson lifted Clattan from the ground in grand style, and hyped him with the greatest apparent ease—a feat that no other man in Britain could have done.

The cheering which followed the giant's downfall was tremendous, and might have been heard on the top of Skiddaw or Saddleback. "Hurrah! hurrah! Well done Wilson!" shouted a hundred voices, while round followed round of applause in rapid succession. It was one of these brilliant and exciting moments, when the miserable party feeling of envy and strife, which sometimes crops up between the two sister counties, was entirely

swamped and forgotten. "Thoo wasn't far wrang," exclaimed a hard featured man, with an austere voice, to his next neighbour, sitting by the side of the ring—"Thoo wasn't far wrang, when thoo said Wilson wad throw him." "Wrang!" replied the other in ecstasies, "I wad think nūt! Wilson's like a cooper, thoo sees. He kens hoo to gang roond a cask!"

An old "statesman," from about Mungrisedale or Penruddock—wearing a pair of buckskin breeches, whose pint of nut-brown had just been upset in the *furor*—is remembered as having been so worked upon by the excitement of the moment, that he threw his hat in the air, and, in derisive language, addressed himself to anybody and everybody, as follows:—"Ha! ha! my fine fellow! If thoo says Clattan *isn't* a gud russler, an' wasn't *olas* a gud russler, thoo tells a heàp o' lees, an' nowte but lees—thoo confoondit taistrel, thoo!"

This fall is still talked of at the firesides of the dalesmen of the north—cottars, farmers, and "statesmen"—as one of the most wonderful and dazzling achievements ever witnessed in the wrestling ring.

Returning again to the next Keswick meeting which followed, Wilson found no difficulty in walking through the ranks of 1820. When only four men were standing, Tom "Dyer" was drawn against Isaac Mason of Croglin, who at that time was looked upon as a dangerous customer in the ring.

It was the opinion of some onlookers that the "Dyer" seemed to be afraid of Mason. Be that as it may, the two not being able to agree about holds —a procedure which has sometimes discredited parties in the ring, and is sorely trying to the patience of spectators—the stewards, after a considerable delay, very properly crossed them both out. Wilson and William Richardson were now the last standers, and the former carried off the Caldbeck hero with ridiculous ease. Litt says, "Richardson had not the shadow of a chance with him." This testimony is exceedingly significant, and says much for Wilson's powers as a wrestler.

"Hoo 'at thoo let him hype the' i' that stupid fashion, thoo numb divel, thoo?" said Tom "Dyer," reproachfully, to the loser of the fall, while the latter was engaged in putting his coat on. "What! *he hes it off*—an' that thoo kens as weel as anybody," was the sturdy reply. "*I* cudn't stop him, ner *thee* nowder, for that matter, if he nobbut gat a fair ho'd o' the'."

The year 1822, found Wilson "rayder gāen back, an' thin o' flesh." He laboured under an asthmatic complaint, which increased upon him about this date, and began to tell much against his athletic attainments. Nevertheless, he attended the Keswick gathering once more. The wrestling was carried on in the bottom of a meadow, and not on the higher ground as previously. The ground being wet and slippery, was consequently disastrous to

many of the wrestlers. Wilson threw Jonathan Watson, a dangerous hand to meet, in the first round, for the head prize; and in one of the subsequent rounds was drawn against Weightman of Hayton. Lifting the huge East Cumbrian "varra clean," but not being able to keep his feet, from the slippery and lumpy state of the ground, Wilson overbalanced himself and fell backwards, with his opponent on the top of him. This untoward accident, in all probability, lost him the chief prize. Cass of Loweswater brought Weightman to grief, in the last round but one, by striking at the outside, and throwing him off the breast.

At the Windermere Regatta, held at Low Wood, during the same year—where the rain fell in torrents—it was generally expected that Wilson, who had conquered so many, would again be the conqueror. But the fates were against him. He came off the third stander, being thrown by Edward Howell, a clever wrestler from Greystoke, in the neighbourhood of Penrith, who won the belt and four sovereigns.

So far as we have been able to ascertain, the year 1822 was the last one in which Wilson figured in the ring. If this be correct, his wrestling career will be limited to four or five years duration, at the utmost. No doubt, the complaint under which he laboured, was the principal cause of his early retirement. Although Wilson loved athletic exercises much, it must be understood, however, that

he viewed them more as a means of recreation and pastime, than in any other sense; a thrifty ambition inducing him to look zealously to the main point of making both ends meet at home.

We have heard it asserted that when he and his first wife were married in 1820, they could only raise ten pounds of loose money between them. With this small sum to the fore, however, they ventured to take an inn at Ambleside, called the Golden Rule, which they rented for seven years, during which time they managed to save £700. They then took a larger inn, which was afterwards known as the Commercial. Some time elapsed, and they removed to the King's Arms, in Patterdale, at that period the only inn at the head of Ullswater.

While he was an innkeeper at Patterdale, George Brunskill, the life guardsman, about the height of Wilson, and two stones heavier, was very anxious to try his skill with him. After much pressing, a friendly bout was consented to, on condition that Brunskill would be satisfied with one fall. The result was that Wilson "dud whack him;" the soldier being carried clean off "befooar he reetly kent whoar he was."

William Wilson—whose brief, but distinguished career, has helped to confer an enduring lustre on the northern wrestling ring—died at Patterdale, in 1836, about forty years old, and was buried in Ambleside churchyard.

JOHN WEIGHTMAN

OF HAYTON.

For great size and well-proportioned figure, combined with amazing strength and activity, John Weightman was one of the most remarkable men ever bred in Cumberland. Born at Greenhead, near Gilsland, in 1795, he was brought up at the quiet pastoral village of Hayton, near Brampton, where he continued to live until the time of his death. In that neighbourhood, he was always spoken of as a remarkably simple minded man, being quiet and settled in appearance when about his daily work or any ordinary pursuit. Fierce passions, however, were then only asleep, shrouding a peculiar temperament, easily excited to mirth or to violent anger.

In a physical point of view, he was a wonder, being endowed with tremendous bodily strength on one hand, and the agility of a cat on the other. He stood fully six feet three inches high, and weighed from fifteen to sixteen stones, presenting one of the finest gigantic models of the human frame ever seen, with a countenance free, open, and pleasant to look upon. Possessing a good reach

of arm, and such formidable power in the shoulders, that in the act of wrestling he invariably beat his elbows into the ribs of an opponent—which vice-like pressure was so terrific in its results, and became so well known, that many strong men were glad to get to the ground, in order to escape his punishing hug. Had these natural advantages been supplemented with shrewdness and good generalship, capable of estimating the different points of an adversary—indispensable requisites to the finished wrestler—he would have been more than a match, the best of five or seven falls, for any man in the kingdom. One who knew him well, once laconically described him as: "A greit thumpin', giant like fellow; varra strang i' th' arm, but rayder wake i' th' brains!"

In his prime, Weightman proved himself to be a clever leaper, either at long length or running high leap—"cat gallows." Many tales are current at Hayton and the neighbourhood of his clearing five-barred gates with the greatest ease. He once leapt over a restless black mare, sixteen hands high, which belonged to Sir James Graham of Edmond Castle; then turned round, and with another short run, went over again from the reverse side. Sir James was so delighted with this display of agility, that he presented the performer with half a guinea.

When a young man, Weightman was as full of tricks of a "daft-like" character as ever mortal was, the recital of one or two of which may serve to

illustrate his great strength and recklessness. Once upon a time, in passing through a toll-gate, he said to the keeper of it: "Ye divvent mak' ony charge, div ye, for what a man carries on his back?" "Oh dear, no, by no means!" was the ready reply. "Than here goes, my canny bairn!" cried Weightman, and presently the toll-collector was astonished to see him stalking through the gate, with a strong-built pony strung across his shoulders!

A still "datter" trick than the foregoing is told of him on another occasion, when he carried a donkey on his shoulders up stairs into a "loft," where a numerous body of lads and lasses were capering away at dancing; placed the "cuddy" in the midst of them; and nearly frightened the wits out of some of the "flayter sooart o' lasses!"

Paradoxical as it may seem, Weightman was a remarkably light and graceful dancer; indeed so much so, that he could trip through the mazes of a dance with as much ease and nimbleness as any slim built youth in his teens. He had a very small and neat foot, which circumstance may in some measure account for his remarkable activity.

As an athlete, Weightman won his first prize on the village green of Wetheral, about the year 1814, being then under twenty years old; and continued to carry off first honours from the same place for seven years in succession. In his twenty-third year, and while making himself a name as the champion of several minor rings, he was matched on Brampton

Sands, to wrestle a man named Routledge, of "Clocky mill," the best of three falls, for two guineas a side. The miller was big, bony, and strong, and so far was formidable; but being both numb and faint-hearted, Weightman easily fettled him off in the two first falls.

During Weightman's whole wrestling career, he never had a more steadfast friend or admirer than Dr. Tinling of Warwick-bridge. The doctor had no doubt formed a correct estimate of the young giant's powers, and saw clearly enough that if they were only exercised with ordinary care and skill, no man living had any chance of throwing him a series of falls. "Th' auld doctor could mak' him owther win or lose, varra nar as he hed a mind," said a clever light weight wrestler, with a shrug of the shoulders.

Notwithstanding the facility with which prizes *might* have been gained, it was only on some occasions that Weightman attended the great annual gathering at Carlisle, and it was a much rarer event for him to go far from home to contend. However, in the early part of his career, he once wandered away to Egremont Crab Fair, and entered his name among the West Cumbrians. He was thrown there, by Ford of Ravenglass, a good hearted wrestler, standing six feet two inches, and weighing fifteen stones. On another occasion, in his young days, he went with Dr. Tinling to Newcastle, and won the wrestling there; his patron, the

doctor, being overjoyed at his success. The prize was a handsome silver watch.

Ford and Weightman were drawn together again, in the fourth round, for the head prize entry at Carlisle in 1821, when the same luck attended Ford as had done at the previous tussle. For the second prize at Carlisle, however, Weightman turned the tables upon the powerful West Cumbrian, by throwing him so ridiculously high in the air, that one of the spectators declared that "his legs seemed to touch the clouds!" Joseph Abbot, from the neighbourhood of Bampton, near Shap, a broad set, powerful man, contested the final fall with Weightman. At that time, "Joe was a greit hand for rivin' doon at th' gūrse, an' crazy mad he was when he lost."

Weightman not being satisfied with his success in contending for the head prize on the Swifts in 1821, a match was arranged to come off between him and the winner of the same—William Richardson of Caldbeck—for five guineas, on the Eden-side cricket ground, Carlisle, in the month of October following. Between four and five thousand people gathered together to witness the contest. There existed a great difference in the age of the two men: the Caldbeck hero being on the shady side of forty, and Weightman only twenty-six. The one might be called a veteran, and the other said to be in the prime of life. The younger man had the advantage, likewise, in weight by a stone or more;

in height, by fully four inches and a half; and was naturally endowed with far more suppleness and activity. A considerable time elapsed before they could agree about holds; and yet, no sooner was this preliminary effected, than the champion of two hundred rings went down like a shot, and without appearing to have the least shadow of a chance. After the fall, the winner was so elated with success that he cut all sorts of ridiculous capers, and kept leaping backwards and forwards, over two or three chairs or forms which chanced to be standing in the ring, after the manner of school boys at their sports. The second fall was nearly a fac-simile of the first; and if Weightman could only have taken things more coolly and waited his time, the chances were a hundred to one that he would have been hailed victor. Instead of this—through Richardson's dilatoriness in taking hold, and otherwise delaying over trifling things—Weightman fairly lost temper, threatened and coerced in various ways, and finally shook his fist in Richardson's face.

Some of the onlookers, sympathizing with the elder man, commenced a vigorous attack of hooting, on which Weightman turned his backside to the spectators in a saucy and defiant manner. After this open display of insolence a tragic finale seemed imminent. The ring was broken up in an instant; and the roughs of the crowd, headed by the notorious Tom Ridley, soon worked themselves into a state of furious excitement. They made a

rush at the delinquent, some dealing out blows with their fists, while others kept up a constant shower of sods and such like missiles; nearly tore the shirt from the back of their victim; and finally forced him savagely through a thorn hedge on the top of the bank. In describing the *melée* which took place, Weightman himself said: "Yan shootit, 'Tek th' watter, Weetman!'—anudder shootit, 'Tek th' dyke, thoo greit gowk, thoo!'—bit I niver kent reetly whoar I was, till I fund mysel' on Eden brig, wid Gwordie Maut* leadin' me seàfly by the hand. I varily believe," added he, "'at Gwordie Maut seàv't mee life!"

Preliminary to this affair, and quite in keeping with its general character, it may be stated that on the morning of the match, as Weightman was riding into Carlisle on a spirited "black-brown" mare, which belonged to his uncle, he threw the money down on the ground, due for passing through the toll-gate at the foot of Botchergate. This Mr. Rayson, the keeper, refused to pick up. Getting annoyed at the delay which ensued, and in order to clear the way, Weightman struck at Rayson across the shoulders with his whip, and then leapt clean over the gate. For this offence he was taken

* "Gwordie Maut," in common phraseology, stood for George Armstrong, a well known character in Carlisle, who kept a public house, between the bridges in Caldewgate. "Gwordie" stood to Matthew Nutter, the artist, for the model of the stooping figure of the Maltster on the sign of the "Malt Shovel," in Rickergate.

to the police office in Scotch Street, from which place his friends, after some difficulty, managed to get him liberated, by paying a fine of forty shillings.

Immediately after the unsatisfactory termination of this match, Weightman issued a challenge to wrestle "any man in Cumberland the best of five falls, for fifteen or twenty guineas." No one came forward to take up the gauntlet thus thrown down; and although, up to this date, Weightman had not won any prize of importance, nevertheless an impression had gone abroad that he was a formidable customer to meet in a number of rounds.

The year 1822 was a very chequered one in Weightman's career, suffering in it, as he did, so many minor defeats. An account of his adventures, so far as they are known to us, and are noted in the local papers, may help to illustrate in some measure both his weakness and his strength. In the month of May, Forster of Penton threw him at Kirkbampton, after a very fine and severe struggle. At Micklethwaite races, near Wigton, in June, he was defeated by Jonathan Watson of Torpenhow; and at Durdar, by James Graham of The Rigg, Kirklinton.

On the Monday of one of the weeks in July, he won the belt at the New Inn, Armathwaite, finally throwing John Peel. On Wednesday afternoon, he went in company with his friend, Bill Gaddes, to Hesket-i'-the-Forest, and carried off a silver cup and half a guinea, for which there was no sport,

"none of the faint-hearted youths daring to contend with him." At Plumpton races, the same evening, he was thrown with ease by a youth of eighteen, named Launcelot Graham of Hutton-end; but succeeded in getting the belt for the last eight standers—he and Thomas Peat tossing up for it, after endeavouring for nearly half an hour to get into holds. On the Thursday of the same week, he won the first prize of half a guinea at Stoneraise.

At Keswick in August, he was fairly capsized by William Cass of Loweswater, in the last round but one of the first day's sport; and on the second day, through the wet and slippery state of the ground, he was again brought to grief, in the final fall, by Jonathan Watson. During the same month, at Wigton races, he carried off the first day's prize of two guineas, in grand style; Tom Richardson, the Dyer, being second. The prize at Great Barrock races also went to Hayton.

At the Carlisle races, held in September, worse luck followed Weightman in contending for the head prize than had done on the previous year—being thrown in the first round by John Fearon of Gilcrux. This unfortunate defeat, however, was the means of arousing the lion in him; and for the second prize "he just bash't them doon as fast as he com at them." The last standers were Clayton of Dovenby, Robert Watters, and Joseph Graham of Dufton: Weightman receiving four guineas as his share, and Graham two guineas as second stander.

In August, 1823, Weightman carried off the second day's prize of three pounds, at the Keswick regatta, disposing of William Sands of Whitehaven in the final fall.

Following immediately after, came the great annual gathering at Carlisle, where it was publicly announced: "If wrestlers don't take hold within half a minute after peeling, the fall to be given to the one most willing to commence playing." William Litt, the author of *Wrestliana*, was chosen umpire. Weightman, the favourite at starting, was in grand "fettle;" looked fresh and ruddy, without carrying an ounce of superfluous flesh; and by the cool and determined way he began each round, evidently meant winning. In the third time over, he brought James Robinson quickly to his knees; in the fourth, John Hudless; in the fifth, John Allison; and in the sixth, was fortunate enough to be odd man. Then came the final struggle with John Robson of Irthington mill, who tried hard to "bear the prize away;" but his struggling was of no avail, for at each move Weightman kept gathering him up and improving his grip, and it soon became the miller's turn to drop powerless to mother earth, in like manner to those compeers who had fallen before.

The following sketch of Weightman appeared in the columns of the *Cumberland Pacquet*, and is supposed to be from the pen of William Litt. "As for the victor, Weightman, he is to a stranger a complete puzzle. To judge from the almost

universal disrepute with which he is regarded in Carlisle and its vicinity, you expect to behold in him every personification of a finished blackguard; but the very first glance is sufficient to stagger any ideal opinion respecting him. I never saw a man of equal birth and education, that had so much of the gentleman in his appearance, and there is, even in his conversation, an unassuming mildness equally striking. As a wrestler, if much cannot be said of his science, his *powers* will not be limited by those who have either tried or seen him wrestle:—for, to cut the matter short, I do not think there is a man in the world possessing any chance with him, the best of five or seven falls. His behaviour in the ring was strictly correct; but such is the general opinion of his powers, that though the wrestling was never previously surpassed, yet the almost certainty of his winning greatly allayed that anxiety for the final result which is essential for creating and keeping awake the interest which the scene usually excites."

A letter appeared in the columns of the *Carlisle Journal*, dated September 16th, 1823, touching facetiously upon a point which, in later years, has been successfully carried out. The writer says:—

SIR,—As a great admirer of athletic sports, I always make a point of being present at the wrestling at our races, but being "small of stature," I frequently miss a good deal of the sport. To gain a complete view I should willingly pay a small sum, and I have no doubt if those concerned in the

management of the sports would provide seats for those willing to pay, that they would be soon filled, and the funds be materially increased, as well as a great convenience granted to me and those of my fellow creatures who have not the good fortune to be above six feet. I am, Sir, &c.,

JOHN *LITTLE.*

About this date, it was currently reported that Weightman had engaged to go to London to undertake the duties of porter at Carlton Palace. No finer looking man could have been selected for this post, but it was not his luck to exchange the bleak north for such desirable quarters. Had he been removed to so aristocratic an atmosphere, it is more than probable that his hot Border blood would have led him into no end of difficulties; as it did, for instance, at the magistrates' office in Carlisle, when he quarrelled over a disputed fall in the wrestling ring, with a big burly fellow, named Tom Hodgson from Wigton. During the trial, Weightman lost all control over his temper, and swore eighteen or nineteen times, although reprimanded for his profanity again and again. On being told that the magistrates intended to fine him a shilling for each and every oath he had sworn, in accordance with an old act recorded in the statute books, he exclaimed: "Fine me for ivery oath I've sworn? That's a bonny go! Wey, I med as weel mak' it *an even pund*, than!" And accordingly he did so.

In the autumn of 1824, the two sons of Henry Howard of Corby Castle—Philip and Henry

Francis—drove in a pony-phæton to Hayton, and asked for Weightman. When they arrived, he was "hard at wark plewin', in a field behint the hoose." Meanwhile, his mother—good soul—not knowing well how to show the greatest amount of civility to her visitors, invited them, in homely phraseology, to "a sup milk, an' a bite o' breid an' cheese." When Weightman made his appearance, he was pressed to attend the forthcoming wrestling meeting on Penrith fell, which he consented to do after some persuasion. Accordingly, he put in an appearance at the races held at Penrith early in October, where a large muster of first-rate men had assembled. Weightman, however, naturally anticipating onlookers with friendly feelings, from Corby and Greystoke castles, had come with a fixed determination to carry off the head prize against all comers. Putting his full powers into play, therefore, whenever he was called into the ring, man after man fell before his slaughtering attacks, in an astonishingly brief space of time; leaving Joseph Abbot of Bampton, second stander. And so delighted was the young heir of Corby with Weightman's achievements, that he brought the victor with him in his carriage from Penrith to Warwick Bridge.

The annual wrestling meeting on the Swifts at Carlisle, in September, 1825, says a local report of that date, "was attended, as usual, by myriads of country people, for whom this manly amusement appears to have charms quite unknown to the

degenerate race pent up within the walls of smoky and enervating towns. The ring was under the entire management of Mr. Henry Pearson, and the most complete order prevailed. It is calculated that from twelve to fifteen thousand persons were lookers-on at the first-day's sports." The first prize was eight guineas; and one guinea was given to the last thrown man, or second stander. Among other well known wrestlers who attended, and whose names are not mentioned hereafter, may be noted, John Robson, Jonathan Watson, Tom Richardson, George Irving, William Earl, Joseph Abbot, and Wilfrid Wright. Weightman, for the second time, carried off first honours, with great ease: all efforts put forth to stop his onward career being futile and unavailing in the extreme. In the third round, he met Dan Burgh of Crookdale-hall; and in the fourth, Thomas Miller of Crookdykes. In the fifth round, James Graham of Kirklinton laid down, because, (as the victor slyly remarked,) "he kent it was neà use russellin'!" In the sixth round, Weightman was lucky enough to be odd man; while, in the final fall, the perfidious tricks and sturdy attacks of Jacob Armstrong availed him nothing—for quick as thought his various moves were frustrated, and he was sent to grass, sprawling on his back, in a style which neither he nor any of his partisans had anticipated.

In the following year, 1826, Weightman was again the successful competitor for the head prize in the

Carlisle ring. He was opposed, from the second round, by the following wrestlers, namely, Thomas Lawman, Wilfrid Wright, John Robson of Irthington mill, Joseph Robley, and George Irving. The description given in the *Carlisle Patriot* of the event, is curious as being the production of one to whom the North Country sport was evidently a novelty, and on that account it may be worth quoting. The writer says :—

"The wrestling on Wednesday, attracted thousands upon thousands of country people, to witness their favourite sport. The play, according to pully-hauley critics, was scientifically excellent. The men squeezed, nipped, buttocked, etc., in the most charming style; and great was the applause of the vast mass congregated around the ring, when some sturdy athlete measured his long length on the ground. On the first day, the grand contest lay between the celebrated Robson, a fine young fellow of about twenty-two, weighing fifteen stone, ten pounds, and the still more celebrated Weightman, also a young man, but of more experience, and five pounds heavier than the weighty Robson. This pair of modern Ajaxes stood up nobly to each other. 'A breathless silence (says a spectator) reigned throughout the ring. · · They laid hold like men—like true athletæ—each confident in his own powers. The struggle begins—now—now—now—huzza! the invincible Weightman is again victorious! Honour and glory once more for the East of Cumberland!!' So says our scientific informant—but not so Mr. Hercules Robson and his friends. They declared that the fall was not a fair one, and the mighty business of the ring was for a while suspended; but the umpire, Mr. Todd, and a great majority of the spectators decided otherwise—and Weightman soon finished the game, and pocketed the first prize, by finally laying low the able-bodied George Irving."

In spite of the umpire's decision, Robson and his friends continued to harp on about what they called the unfairness of the fall on the Swifts, until they issued a challenge to the effect that Robson was prepared to wrestle Weightman for £20,—which was readily accepted by the latter. According to agreement, the two men met about three weeks after, in Crosby Willows, a meadow near Low Crosby, which turned out a hollow affair after all, nothing really occurring, except several tedious attempts to get into holds. While the rain was pouring in torrents, and the spectators becoming restless at the absence of sport, an amicable finale was ultimately arrived at by Robson shouting across the ring: "We'll russel neà farther, Weetman, i' this doon-pour o' rain. Cu' thy ways here, my lad, an' I'll gie the' a leg on to my nag." Weightman offering no opposition to this proposal, the two were soon mounted, and rode together to a neighbouring house of refreshment, where a few friendly glasses passed between them, which probably helped to fill up the existing breach. In after years, Weightman always spoke of Robson with much respect, describing him as "a canny weel donn't lad, an' a varra gud russeller."

Robson, who excelled principally as a "hyper," measured six feet two inches in height, and increased in weight and bulk, year by year, until at the age of twenty-four he weighed as many stones as he numbered years. He died young—in March, 1830—

his coffin being so large that it was impossible to get it into the room where the corpse lay, without taking the window out. He had a narrow escape from being robbed about three years before his death. Returning from Carlisle, some highwaymen attacked him while passing through the woods between Corby and Ruel Holme. He, however, got clear off from the miscreants, and arrived at home without harm or loss of property, although he was fired at in making his escape.

Weightman won twice at Melmerby Rounds, getting a guinea and the belt each time, the usual award to the victor. On one of these occasions, when returning home through the village of Cumrew, his companions and he being fresh in drink, smashed a window to atoms, and had fifteen shillings to pay for their wanton mischief.

At Penrith in 1827, it was generally expected that Weightman would be the victor, but it turned out otherwise. He was thrown in the fourth round by a mere stripling, under twenty years of age, named John Loy, who, it is only fair to state, gained the fall in rather a surreptitious manner. Weightman's own account of the affair was this: "A bit iv a lad stept oot of a corner o' the ring, an' *pretendit* he wasn't gāen to russel; but aw at yance, t' lāl taistral snapt't, an' bash't me doon iv a varra nasty fashion."

During the same year, William Cass of Loweswater, the winner at Carlisle in 1822, challenged

any man in the north to wrestle a match for twenty guineas. In reply to this challenge, Weightman sent the following letter to the editor of the *Cumberland Pacquet*:—

SIR,—In reply to the challenge of Mr. Cass, given in your paper of last week, to wrestle any man in Cumberland, Westmorland, or Lancashire, for twenty guineas, I beg to inform him through the same medium, that I and my friends will be at the Duke's Head Inn, Scotch-street, Carlisle, at two o'clock in the afternoon of Saturday, October the 27th, where I hope his friends will meet us to arrange preliminaries and deposit the money.—I remain, Sir, yours very respectfully,

JOHN WEIGHTMAN.

The wrestling world in the northern counties looked forward to this match with intense interest, but Cass thought backing out to be safer policy than encountering an opponent so formidable.

In the year 1828, some preliminary steps were taken towards arranging a match between Weightman and Mc.Laughlan, the innkeeper, at the annual gathering at Carlisle in the autumn; but like the preceding ones, it came to nothing—finally ending in a tie, and then a wrangle. Mc.Laughlan at that time was a great overgrown giant, weighing at least five or six stone heavier than his rival. Referring to this meeting many years after, Weightman said: "Clatten com up—i' fun iv his way o' 't—gat hod o' me afooar I kent reetly whoar I was, an' flang me doon like a havver sheaf. Sec bairnish nonsense as that, ye know, suin rais't my dander, an' i' th'

next roond I dūd whack him! I pait him weel back iv his oan mak o' coin."

An acquaintance one day asked Mc.Laughlan how he liked Weightman's "grip" at Carlisle. "Oh, Lord! it was fair vice wark!" exclaimed the giant, giving an involuntary shudder at the mere thought of being screwed up in the "vice."

In October, 1829, Weightman bore away the chief prize from the Penrith ring a second time. The entry included Cass of Loweswater and George Irving—both thrown by Weightman—and most of the best men in Cumberland and Westmorland. At the conclusion of the wrestling, the winner could have been backed against any man in England for £100.

At Wigton—date uncertain—where there was a strong muster of good men from the East and West, the head prize of eight guineas fell into Weightman's hands.

At one time or other, Weightman won seventeen silver cups, and once, on being asked what became of them, candidly replied: "I selt ivery yan o' them, an' drank th' brass."

An anecdote illustrative of his fearless courage and successful resistance to apparently overwhelming odds, must not be forgotten. In the year 1829, his uncle sold a cow to a butcher in Carlisle, named Roberts, we believe. The payment for it not being forthcoming at the proper time, nor any prospect of it, Weightman was despatched to recover the

amount owing, and rode to Carlisle on a brown filly for that purpose. Coming up with Roberts on Eden bridges—in company with another butcher and a confederate—Weightman told him he wanted "owther the coo back with him, or the brass to pay for it." The only reply to this question was the filly being struck so forcibly with a thick stick, that it was nearly "fell'd" to the ground with the stroke. Boiling with indignation at this treatment, Weightman cried out: "If ye strike the beast ageàn, I'll strike ye doon!" Again the filly was struck. and the fray began in earnest. Leaping off his horse, Weightman seized the two butchers, taking one in each arm, and "clash't the'r heids togidder till bleùd flew aboot like onything!" Their confederate also joined the fray in a skirmishing mode of attack, and although it was now three against one, they were rapidly getting the worst of it. Seeing the tide thus turning against them, one of the rascals resorted to the knife, and inflicted a great gash on Weightman's hand, the mark of which he bore to his dying day. An onlooker, who interfered on Weightman's behalf, was immediately knocked down, under the wheels of a cart, and severely injured. Things becoming thus desperate, several by-standers stepped forward at this stage of the affray, and put an end to the dastardly attack.

Although Weightman possessed no lack of courage when it was called into action by such an event as the foregoing, he was, nevertheless, often very diffi-

dcnt and reserved in the affairs of everyday life. "I's nobbut shy— I's nobbut varra shy, an' divvent like to ax onybody," was a phrase frequently on his lips, when any trivial favour had to be solicited.

At one time of his life, his company was a good deal sought after by 'Torny Armstrong, and two neighbouring 'statesmen, named Bleaymire and Jordan. "Sec chaps," said he, in regretful tones,— "sec wild divvels as thur, aye wantit a feùl; an' I sarra't for yen langer than I sud ha' deùn." After his wrestling days were over, Weightman continued his irregular habits and mode of life, and as age crept on he was by times reduced to considerable straits in order to make both ends meet. Hard-fisted poverty, and the pressure of circumstances in various ways, not unfrequently forced his simple Cumbrian speech to shape itself into proverbial phrases, which sometimes lingered in the memories of those who heard them for weeks and months after. Take the following as examples: "Fwok sud aye be menseful, an' menseful amang fwok." And again: "Jwohn Barleycworn's ruin't mony a gud heart, an' 'ill ruin mony mair yet."

Poor Weightman! When Mr. Scott was taking the portrait, by photography, which illustrates this volume, the old man was greatly surprised at the process, and asked with much simplicity: "Is it a thing he hes mannish't to pick up by his oan ingenuity, d'ye think?—or hes't been put into him by God Almighty?"

In his eightieth year, being reduced to the most abject poverty, alone in the world, and without friends to assist him, an appeal was made through the local papers for assistance, which met with a generous response on the part of the public, and served to "keep hunger frae t' dooar" while his health continued to be anything like good. But at the close of the year 1874—in the midst of one of the severest winters on record—Weightman had a stroke, which laid him prostrate; and having no one near to minister to his wants, the parish authorities stept in and insisted upon his being removed to the poor-house at Brampton. This was sore news to the poor man, and went sadly against the grain, but there was no help for it. And in January, 1875, he, whose exploits in the wrestling ring had been cheered to the echo, again and again, by tens of thousands, at last found a pauper's grave—his corpse being followed thither by a couple of infirm old men from the workhouse, and none else.

Such was the end of the powerful and gigantic John Weightman.

JOHN MC. LAUGHLAN

OF DOVENBY.

In the early part of the nineteenth century there lived at the rural village of Dovenby, a few miles north-west from Cockermouth, by far the tallest man in Cumberland—a man who stood six feet six inches in height, and who was one of Pharoah's lean kine, having at that date an hungry, unsatisfied look about him, which was anything but pleasant to the vision. This was John Mc.Laughlan, a labouring man, better known as "Clattan," who at certain seasons of the year, gained a livelihood by working in the woods at Isel, and at other times by paring turf on the pastures about Aspatria.

The parents of this gigantic youth were both natives of the Highlands of Scotland, having migrated early in life southwards, and settled in Cumberland. The father was remarkably dexterous at sword exercise and fencing with the stick; who, in a friendly contest, sometimes took delight in showing his skill by hitting his opponent at pleasure, and on almost any part of the body he chose.

"Clattan" was born about the year 1791; and as a lad practised wrestling upon the village green,

with other Dovenby boys of a similar age. Growing up to manhood, and becoming master of a moderate share of science and action, he invariably lifted his opponents from the ground, and carried them off with the outside stroke; his principal mainstay, however, being his great height and immense weight. In the ring, he was exceedingly good-natured and affable, and would put himself to any amount of inconvenience rather than allow his body to fall awkwardly or heavily on a vanquished foe. He did not, however, follow wrestling closely. He only appeared upon the horizon by fits and starts, as it were; and in tracing his career, it will be found that two or three lengthy intervals intervene between his retirements and reappearances.

As an athlete, Mc.Laughlan was somewhat late in flowering, having reached the age of twenty-six before he accomplished any feat worthy of record. In 1817, he put in his first public appearance at Carlisle, at the wrestling in Shearer's Circus. Here he managed to mow down all competitors, including Tom Todd of Knarsdale, James Robinson, the gamekeeper, and, finally, his friend and neighbour, John Liddle of Bothel. About this date he was "a lang, thin, strip iv a chap, like a ladder; hed a varra laddish like leuk; a feùt gaily nar as lang's a fender; an' was rayder wake aboot the knees." Or, to change the simile—as a native of Cartmel-fell once aptly phrased it: "Big an' beàny as he was, he was nobbut like a splinter blown off a man!"

After his temporary success at Carlisle, fortune seems to have deserted him for many years. In 1819, he suffered his most memorable defeat at the hands of William Wilson of Ambleside, in the Keswick ring, who carried him off with a sweeping hipe. In 1824, he appeared at Wigton sports, and was thrown in the third round by Thomas Hodgson, the police-constable; and again in the third round of the second day, by James Graham of Kirklinton. In August, 1825, however, Clattan carried off the head prize at Whitehaven; Jonathan Watson being second.

We are not aware that he wrestled in any ring from the last date mentioned, until his return in the year 1828, when he had grown amazingly in bulk, being then about twenty-two stone weight. At that time he was considered to be the most powerful man in Cumberland, and as an athlete had no rival, if we except Weightman of Hayton. It was an exaggerated, but nevertheless a very common saying, that he could lift a cottage house with ease, and carry it away with him on his back!

The year 1828—with its curious winding-up scene—was the most noteworthy one in Clattan's wrestling career. In the month of August, he carried off the head prize at Workington races, with the greatest ease; George Irving of Bolton-gate being the second stander.

At Keswick in September, almost the self-same scene was enacted, with Irving again second. Big

men, like Cass of Loweswater, being, as it were, mere children in Clattan's arms.

Following immediately in the rear of the Keswick races, came the annual gathering at Carlisle, where the Earl of Lonsdale still continued to give the sum of twenty guineas for prizes. Notwithstanding the morning on which the wrestling took place being gloomy and foreboding, hundreds and thousands poured into the old Border city from every available direction, and it was computed that at least 6,000 persons were gathered round the wrestling ring. Whilst ninety-two names were being enrolled for the head prize, including most of the crack men of the day, a group of itinerant ballad singers stood bawling to the assembled multitude, such home-spun staves as the following :—

"Now, Weightman, you must do your best
To bear the prize away ;
For Clattan he is coming ;
Don't let him win the day."

We have reasons for saying that Weightman was *not* at the wrestling on the Swifts that year. We believe he was engaged driving cattle at the time, at some considerable distance from Carlisle. His name was certainly entered by some person or other, and he was called out in the first round against Hutchinson of Featherstone Castle ; but there being no response on Weightman's part, the ticket naturally fell to Hutchinson's lot.

Having only to contend against men of ordinary

calibre—the heaviest and tallest of whom would be fully six or seven stone deficient in weight, and about the same number of inches in height—Clattan, wearing a pair of Nankeen trousers, stalked through the Carlisle ring, in the most unobtrusive manner imaginable, and without making the least display of his giant strength. In the first round he was called against Rickerby of Old Wall, and Robinson of Renwick in the second. Despite some futile struggling on the part of these two men, he lifted them up and laid them down as easily as Gulliver would have done a couple of Lilliputians. In the third round, William Earl of Cumwhitton went to work with a will, and completely foiled Clattan by keeping well away from him. Not being able to gather Earl and hug him as he had done the previous ones, the tussle became an animated one, and for a time seemed to be of a doubtful character; but on improving his hold, the big man managed to twist Earl awkwardly to the ground by sheer strength. Next followed, in quick succession, the overthrow of Joseph Graham of Dufton, James Graham of Kirklinton, and Tom Richardson, the Dyer, at the hands of Clattan.

Only two men were now left standing, namely, George Irving of Boltongate, and Clattan; and by Irving asking Clattan, as a favour, not to throw himself heavily on him, the result was understood to be a foregone conclusion. Good-naturedly acting upon this request, Clattan without more ado,

whipped Irving off his feet, turned him smartly round, and then let go his hold, in order to avoid falling on his man. Meanwhile, Irving having cunningly retained *his* hold, claimed the fall, which according to the rules of the game, was awarded to him by the umpires. The scene which followed baffles all description. The crowd danced, laughed, yelled, and ran wild with commotion. Clattan was completely nonplussed by the *ruse*, and bore the result for a time with Job-like patience; but at length his good nature fairly broke down. He fumed and tore about like one half crazed, ground his teeth, and swore he "wad russel him for fifty pund to a pund—for a hundred pund to a pund—for any amount he liket!" But Irving, having accomplished his ends, was far too wary a customer to be drawn into any further trial which meant defeat. Meanwhile, Irving's friends hoisted him shoulder high, and bore him away in triumph; and poor Clattan could only content himself with a final shot at his enemy by crying out: "If iver I git hod o' thee ageàn, my lad, *I'll mak the' put thy tongue oot!*"

After this mishap, the tide of popularity seems to have set in against Mc.Laughlan in all directions. At Dovenby races, held in June, 1829, he put in an appearance, but no sooner was his name called than it created much discontent among the competitors: one wrestler swearing that he was "as big as a hoose side," and another asking derisively for a

ladder, "to clim' on t' top of his shooders wid!" In order to dispel this outburst of feeling, the stewards offered the giant a liberal sum if he would take the post of umpire, and give up contending; which proposal he accepted in the most cordial manner. The chief prize for wrestling (after the withdrawal of the big man,) was carried off by Jonathan Robinson of Allerby mill.

A correspondent of the *Cumberland Pacquet*, in speaking of the Penrith races in 1829, says, he "cannot imagine upon what principle of justice the individuals acted, who brought a man fifty miles from home by an open advertisement, and then debarred him." The same correspondent, also, complains that Mc.Laughlan was excluded from the Carlisle ring of the same year, in the face of an advertisement which distinctly stated it was "open to any man."

At the great gathering at Cockermouth in August, 1830, Clattan was allowed to enter his name without opposition in the first day's list, where he carried off the head prize, throwing James Little, George Murgatroyd, John Birket, and finally William Earl.

In 1837, his last victory, we believe, was gained at Liverpool, after mowing down John Nichol of Bothel, Jonathan Thomlinson, and Thomas Armstrong of Carlisle, in the heavy weight prize.

Clattan figured again in the Liverpool ring in 1840, at which date he would be about fifty years old; but the fates were against him. He was

drawn against John Selkirk of Beckermet. It is worthy of remark, (says a report in the *Carlisle Journal*,) that Selkirk's father threw Mc.Laughlan twenty-six years ago; and Mc.Laughlan was overheard to say, it would be a shame to let both father and son throw him. But so it proved, for after a very severe struggle, in which Selkirk showed himself to be a wrestler of no ordinary ability, the first fall was given in as unfair, and they had to wrestle over again. In getting hold a second time, Mc.Laughlan put all his powers in requisition, but to no avail, for Selkirk threw him in a masterly manner.

One incongruous element of Clattan's character has still to be mentioned, namely, his *weakness* for sparring and boxing. His temperament was made up of too many good-natured components to allow of his ever degenerating into a mere prize-fighter. The big man, to the best of our knowledge, had a determined "set-to" once, and only once. It occurred at a Bridewain held in the Vale of Lorton. William Mackereth and Clattan—who had been close friends for years—fell out over some trifling affair, and a keenly contested fight was the result. After the struggle had continued some time, Mackereth succeeded in driving Clattan from one stand to another, until the giant finally gave in. Clattan threatened to "fettle him off when he com back frae sparring," with the professors of the noble art mentioned hereafter; but he proved to be far too

good natured to attempt to carry any such threat into execution.

Clattan's "experience with the bruising fraternity" —we quote from a clever notice, which appeared in the *Whitehaven News*—"was confined to travelling with the celebrated pugilists, Tom Molyneaux, the Black, (who twice contested the championship with Tom Cribb,) and Jack Carter, the latter of whom fought a terrible battle with Oliver at Gretna Green in 1816. · · With these heroes, John made a tour in the provinces and Scotland, extending over four or five years, in the course of which he gave and took more hard knocks, as an exhibition sparrer, from his formidable and dexterous colleagues, than would satisfy the ambition of most men; but, as we have said, the big man never acquired a taste for fighting. It was scarcely possible, under any circumstances, to surprise him out of one of the quietest dispositions and finest tempers with which giant was ever blessed; and the sole use he made of the hard schooling he received at the hands of Molyneaux and Carter, and the countless yokels, ambitious of fistic distinction, was to amuse a few of his patrons. The art and mystery of bruising was practised nowhere more extensively and industriously than by a chosen band of youths who frequented John's house in the Market-place, Whitehaven. To oblige these young gentlemen, and test their dexterity, 'Clattan' has been known to sit down in a chair, to ensure something like

equality of height, and 'set himself'; and very dexterous had young Whitehaven to be if it could hit and get away, even under these circumstances, without a counter tap, as from a playful steam hammer. · · Many wonderful tales are told of 'Clattan.' He could crack nuts with his thumb and forefinger as easily as a schoolboy could crush a gooseberry, and we forget the enormous weight he could suspend round his wrist while he wrote his name against the wall."

Mc.Laughlan was an innkeeper in Whitehaven for a great number of years, being the landlord of "The Highlandman," or "Rising Sun," in the Market-place. Here he drove a flourishing trade, which resulted in a great measure from frequenters of his house always finding him to be civil and obliging.

At Whitehaven, Clattan joined the town band formed by Mr. Heywood, clerk to the magistrates. In this capacity, he invariably marched first in processions, and did what he could to make sweet music out of the instrument he played, an immense trombone, his giant-like form towering above his fellows, like that of Goliath of Gath among the Gittites.

Leaving Whitehaven about 1838 or 1839, he settled in Liverpool, where he was employed about the docks for several years. His wife, Betty, afterwards kept a lodging-house in Sparling-street; but more latterly they lived retired and in comfort-

able circumstances, principally through the kindness of one of his sons, the captain of a trading vessel.

Mc.Laughlan died in Liverpool, in October, 1876, at the advanced age of eighty-five years.

BULL BAITING.

It must be exceedingly gratifying to all ranks of society throughout the United Kingdom, who take any interest in the social progress of the inhabitants, in the onward march from semi-barbarism to a higher state of civilization—from indulgence in brutal amusements, pursued with eager gratification during the eighteenth century—to note a gradual stamping out of vicious pursuits, and the growth of more harmless amusements.

Amongst the lower order of our crowded towns and rural districts, amongst the middle classes of society, and even amongst the higher orders—the cream of society—the welcome change is strikingly evident. The lower orders were probably the most prone to indulge in the vile and degrading pursuits, which have in a great measure been rooted out, but they were by no means the only culpable parties. The higher and middle classes freely lent their countenance and support—lent their assistance not alone by being present at, but by liberal contributions aided in getting up, the horrible scenes witnessed at the bull-ring, the bear garden, the cock and rat pits, the boxing ring, and badger worrying.

Even royalty, with its gorgeous trappings, and long list of titled favourites, smiled at and enjoyed the ferocious pastime.

A laudable endeavour to abolish them was made in the year 1800. A bill was introduced by Sir W. Pulteney, into the House of Commons, for the abolition of bull baiting and other cruel sports; but Mr. Wyndham—the leader at that time of a powerful party of country gentlemen—opposed the bill on the ground that it attempted to suppress a national amusement, which was not more cruel than fox-hunting; a pastime so important that a clever writer has said, "You ruin the country as soon as you put an end to fox-hunting." Mr. Wyndham, on the one hand, was supported by Mr. Canning, and on the other hand opposed by Mr. Sheridan. Up to the year 1835, an agitation was fostered against brutal sports, and the time-honoured institutions of seven centuries were then, by Act of Parliament, for ever blotted out from the town and country pleasures of Great Britain and Ireland.

The defunct pastimes, we have under consideration, were amongst the most exciting as well as brutal amusements of the eighteenth century, and to a record of them in the "good old times," this short article will be devoted. In nearly every town, and in most rural districts, there was the attractive bull ring. The gatherings never attained the gigantic and imposing dimensions of the Roman

Coliseum and the Spanish Amphitheatre bull fights —institutions no better than a species of bull baiting, and attended with greater cruelty and bloodshed than the English bull ring. The national mind in our own country was never so thoroughly embued with the horrible pastime as the citizens of Rome and Madrid; but was sufficiently brutified as to be considered at the present time a disgrace to humanity. The sad sights, however, which gladdened the eye, and drew forth shouts of applause, from "good Queen Bess" and her followers, when she entertained the ambassadors from Continental courts, with a display of bear and bull baiting, are happily at an end.

We shall now proceed to the more immediate object of our article, namely, a notice of bull baiting in our own country, and more particularly in the two northern counties of Cumberland and Westmorland. In England, the baiting was done, as our readers will doubtless be aware, with a breed of dogs peculiar to the country, called "bull" dogs. This breed, so famous in story, might probably have become extinct after bull baiting was abolished, had it not been for the numerous dog shows which have since taken place throughout the country, where prizes are given for purity of breed and excellence of form. Their principal characteristics are indomitable courage, and an instinctive propensity to pin their huge adversary by the nose. In order to effect this object, well bred dogs would

rush furiously at the bull, and although they might be unsuccessful and stand a chance of being tossed high in the air, they never failed in returning again and again to the attack. Wonderful stories may be gleaned, in all parts of the kingdom, illustrative of their never dying resolute courage. In the quality of endurance, under punishment, they may be likened to the English game cock—the agonies of death even not being able to quench their fighting propensities.

The following well authenticated anecdote, related by Bewick, the wood engraver, illustrates this point in a most barbarous and disgraceful manner. Many years ago, at a bull baiting in the North of England, a young man, confident of the courage of his dog, laid some trifling wager, that he would, at separate times, cut off all the four feet of his dog, and that, after each amputation, it would attack the bull. The cruel experiment was tried, and the gallant and courageous dog continued to rush at the bull, upon its four stumps, as eagerly as if it had been perfectly whole!

Another anecdote of the bull dog has more of a ludicrous dash about it. A father and son, in a northern village, had a young pup, descended from a famous breed, out for exercise and training. The son accosted the rough old paterfamilias with: "Doon on ye'r knees, fadder, an' boo like a bull!" The "fadder" did as he was desired, and began "booin'." Before many "boos" had been repeated,

however, the pup had seized the sham "booin'" bull firmly by the nose. Delighted at the ready tact displayed by the dog, young hopeful roared out: "Bide it, fadder! bide it! It'll be t' *makkin'* o' t' pup!"

Carlisle is the first northern town at which we shall notice bull baiting. Our account has been gathered from tradition and from spectators of the scenes. The old bull ring stood in the market place, in close proximity to the "stocks," on that space of ground lying between the ancient cross and the front of the town hall. There, from time immemorial, was the savage pastime witnessed by generation after generation. If we cannot carry it back to the dim mystical times, when

> Kinge Arthur lived in merry Carleile,
> And seemely was to see,
> And there with him Queene Genever,
> That bride soe bright of blee—

It requires but a limited stretch of the imagination to picture it in full swing at the time when the three brave foresters of Inglewood flourished,—Adam Bell, Clym o' the Clough, and William o' Cloudeslee, —and when the two former rescued the latter from the hangman's cart in the same market place.

> And Cloudeslee lay ready there in a cart,
> Ffast bound both foote and hande;
> And a strong rope about his necke,
> All readye ffor to hange.

Men have been maimed for life, and even gored

to death, in bull baiting frays, held in front of the Carlisle town hall. A large ferocious animal, known as the "Linstock bull," was baited no less than three times. It once broke loose from the ring; threw the multitude into wild disorder; knocked down several of the bystanders, who came in contact with its onward progress; and ran a butcher, named Gibbons, up against the wall! At this exciting moment a cry from the crowd rent the air, which appalled the bravest heart, but happily no material damage was done. For, curiously enough, the man's life was saved through the animal's horns growing far apart; the bull being one of the Lancashire long-horned breed, formerly very common throughout the north country.

In old times, an aged woman, of coarse features and Amazonian strength, figured prominently in the Carlisle ring, and was invariably accompanied by a savage dog, called "Pincher." Her shrill voice was often heard, far above the hubbub of the crowd, with such exclamations as, "Weel done, Pincher!—good dog, Pincher!—stick till't, Pincher! Ha! ha! Pincher's gripp't it noo!" And then, all at once, up went the veritable Pincher, twenty feet in the air, turning "bully necks" three or four times, and falling on the ground with a heavy thud, stunned and bleeding.

After prevailing at Carlisle for four or five centuries, and continuing as time rolled on without any abatement to the end, both vicious and brutal,

bull baiting was finally suppressed *within* the limits of the ancient border city, about the end of the eighteenth century.

The last public bull baitings at Carlisle took place in the cattle market on the "Sands"—then *outside* the city boundaries—in the months of August and September, 1824. Long before the time fixed to commence the proceedings on the first occasion, thousands of persons—many of them females—were assembled. The adjoining bridge was thronged, houses were covered, and every eminence densely packed with eager expectant human beings. All the scum and blackguardism of the old border city had quitted it. No such outpouring could be remembered to have taken place, except when the noted professors of pugilism, Carter and Oliver, contended at Gretna. The bull to be baited was of the black Galloway breed, and had been purchased under peculiar circumstances, by a few disreputable characters. In contending against its canine assailants, it laboured under the great disadvantage of being without horns.

The primary cause of the baitings was owing to the fact of the animal having shown itself vicious, or in local phraseology, "man keen," by attacking its owner, Mr. Rome of Park-house farm, near Rose Castle. Suddenly turning round, in an open field, it tossed Mr. Rome over three "riggs," injuring him so much that recovery was for some time considered doubtful. It was supposed the bull had

been irritated by a butcher's boy. This may have been the case; but too much reliance is often placed on the general docility of bulls. They are well known to be liable to sudden outbursts of passion. This dangerous element may be said to be wedded to their nature, and hence the deplorable accidents that sometimes happen. Due caution was wanting in this case. The Park-house bull had previously shewn symptoms of an unruly disposition, and yet Mr. Rome unguardedly entered the "bull copy" to drive away some cows. The attack was so sudden, that there was no chance of escape, and the owner would in all probability have been killed on the spot, but for the opportune assistance of two men servants, who succeeded in driving off the excited and furious beast with pitchforks.

On two separate occasions, the unfortunate beast was bound to the stake on the Sands. It would have been, comparatively speaking, a merciful end to the animal's life to have killed it at once, without inflicting the torture of baiting, for the alleged purpose of rendering the beef tender. The bull was fastened by a heavy chain, some twenty yards long, sufficient to give it room to make play. At one time the conduct of the crowd was so confused and disorderly, that several persons were injured, by the frightened animal rushing about, and sweeping them off their feet with its chain. No one, however, received any serious injury.

Several noted dogs were slipped at the bull. A yellow one, known in sporting circles as David Spedding's "Peace;" a dark brindled one, owned by Dan Sims, the publican; and a bitch, belonging to one Kirkpatrick; all seized the bull cleverly by the nose, and made "good work." The yellow dog especially had the knack of laying hold, and maintaining its grip to perfection. Its usual mode of attack was to run between the fore legs of the bull, fasten itself to the under lip, and then hang on like grim death.

Much amusement was created, by an Irishman running fussing about, and shouting at the top of his voice: "Hould on there, hould on, till my dog saizes the big baiste!" Pat let go. His dog made a bold dash at the bull, and good sport was anticipated by the onlookers; but no sooner was the dog turned upon by the enraged animal, than it showed tail, and ran for safety. This "funking" on the part of the Irishman's dog, created loud laughter among the crowd, and was followed by such bantering remarks as, "Arrah, Pat, arrah! Ye'r dog's not game!"

In the hubbub, a man named Robert Telford, an auctioneer, was knocked over by a sudden swerve of the ponderous chain which fastened the bull, and for some time lay sprawling helpless in the dirt. He had a narrow escape from being tossed in the air, boots uppermost, or else savagely gored.

Scarcely had the barking and growling of the

dogs subsided, or the yelling and shouting of the assembled rabble died away, when one of the onlookers, who had been somewhat disappointed in the scenes enacted, pronounced it to be but "a tamish sort of affair, after all!" A local celebrity,* also, on leaving the ground, delivered himself of the following opinion, in slow pompous tones: "Bad bait—bad bait! Bull too gross!"—the meaning of which was that the bull was too fat to display that ferocity and activity which some of the spectators had expected it would have done.

So fagged and spiritless had the animal become after one of the baits, that a rough-spun butcher—a madcap of a fellow—had the temerity to leap astride its back, and to ride up Rickergate in that ungainly fashion; while the poor beast, now completely deadened to attack or viciousness of any kind, was being slowly lead in the direction of some shambles or outbuildings in East Tower street.

A disaster which befel the comedian, Riley, a few years before Mr. Rome was nearly killed at Park-house farm, had a somewhat ludicrous termination. The author of the *Itinerant*, in professionally "starring" through the provinces, remained for some time in the neighbourhood of Furness Abbey, and was engaged to lend his assistance there. The

* Mr. William Browne, who began life in Carlisle as a bookbinder, and ended as auctioneer, appraiser, and high-bailiff to the County Court.

entertainment going off very successfully, a "leetle" too much wine followed on the heels of it. This we presume, for the quantity imbibed by Mr. Riley rendered his perception not quite so clear as it might have been. The way to his quarters was by a footpath through some fields; and jogging along by the dimmish light of an obscured moon, he rambled off the path, and got into a field in which a pugnaciously inclined bull was kept. Snatches of song and other sounds arousing the brute from his night's slumber, he rose and prepared to attack the son of *Thespis*, and gave notice of his intentions by several long drawn "boos," which "boos" Mr. Riley attributed to some one coming after him from the concert. The bull followed up, and got nearer and nearer, with his "boo—boo—boo!" A collision suddenly took place close to the hedge, and in the twinkling of an eye the gentleman was tossed up, and landed secure, but prostrate, on the other side of the hedge, without any harm but a good shaking. Looking up, the astonished comedian exclaimed: "You are neither a musician nor a gentleman, by ——, if you are!"

During the eighteenth century, and for thirty or forty years into the present one, farmers, small tradesmen, indeed, most families living in the country, who could afford it, at the fall of the year, salted and stored by as much beef as served the family through the winter. Hence bull baiting—until suppressed—prevailed in most of the northern

towns and villages, in the month of November. The weather was then suitable for salting a supply of beef for winter use, and an extra quantity either of bull or heifer beef was quite saleable at that season of the year. An erroneous idea prevailed—had indeed become a settled conviction, that bull beef was much better—should not be used as food, in fact, without the animal had been subject to the usual barbarous baiting.

In many places there prevailed a stringent regulation, that bulls should not be slaughtered, until they had passed the ordeal of baiting; and curious observances were enforced should the practice be omitted. In Kendal, for instance, a singular custom was to be observed when any butcher killed a bull, and attempted to dispose of the beef, without the animal having been fastened to the bull ring and baited. The seller of the carcass was obliged to have put up conspicuously, a large sign board, with the words "Bull Beef," painted in legible letters, and to have a lantern stuck up, with lighted candles burning in it, as long as the tabooed beef remained unsold. This singular regulation or custom continued in use, and was regularly observed as long as bull baiting was permitted in the town.

The Kendal bull ring was fixed on a green at the High Beast Banks, and had been so fixed for generations. There the disgusting, demoralizing saturnalia, with all its ruffianly concomitants, was held before a yelling crowd of professedly civilized

spectators. This brutal indulgence was continued to the mayoralty of Mr. William Dobson, in 1790, when the corporation interfered and put a final stop to it. We are surprised that in Kendal, where the Quaker element in the population was so strong, the odious "sport" should have been allowed to to continue so long. The followers of George Fox, we feel assured, would consider any encouragement given to such degrading brutality as morally criminal.

Great Dockray and Sandgate, in the pleasant and busy market town of Penrith, were the scenes of many uproarious bull baits. In one day, no less than five beasts have been tied to the stake, and unmercifully tortured. They would all be required, and many carcasses besides, at that season of the year when salt beef was prepared for winter consumption. At Penrith, the bull baitings were regularly attended by crowds of spectators, from all the surrounding country villages. The inhabitants of the town, too, deserted their quiet homes to witness the exciting but barbarous practice. In Penrith, as well as other places, the idea was rooted in the minds of the people that bulls intended for slaughter, and sold for human food, should be baited. If the carcass of a bull, in the shambles of a butcher, had not been subjected to the usual process of brutal cruelty, it would have been rejected. The village of Stainton, as well as Penrith, was noted for bull dogs of a pure and courageous breed.

Those normal tribes of gipsies, tinkers, and potters, who roamed over Cumberland, Westmorland, and the borders of Scotland, during the latter part of the eighteenth century, were celebrated for breeding and training bull dogs of a superior description.

The small but interesting market town of Keswick —highly celebrated at the present day, as the head quarters of numerous lake and mountain excursionists—likewise had its bull ring, to which, through a lengthened period of time, hundreds of unfortunate animals were tied and baited. No greater desecration can be imagined to one of the most attractive districts in Great Britain—revealing at every step scenes displaying vividly the sublime beauty and grandeur of God's choicest handiwork—than the mad uproar, the wild confusion, and gross brutality of a bull bait. The echoes of the surrounding hills were made to resound with the furious merriment of an excited multitude, in the full enjoyment of a cruel "sport." From the beautiful Vale of Saint John, from the lower slopes of Blencathra and Skiddaw, from the confines of the picturesque lake of Bassenthwaite, from the surroundings of the more imposing Derwentwater, from many scattered villages, like Borrowdale, crowds hastened to share in the gross enjoyment of a hideous outrage on humanity.

The bull ring at Keswick,—as well as at Carlisle, Penrith, Wigton, Kendal, and other places in the Lake country—was frequently the means of starting

a combat between some pugnaciously inclined Tom Crib, and any one who, through intimidation, could be drawn into a fight. "Shaking the bull ring" was tantamount to a challenge from some foolhardy individual, to "hev it oot" with any one inclined to step forward; and it rarely happened at "statute fairs" but that at least some two or three pugilistic encounters followed the "shaking."

BADGERS AND BADGER BAITING.

BAITING the badger differed from bull baiting in one respect, inasmuch as the former was generally practised in some room or yard, mostly attached to a public house. It was often a private affair, got up by some sporting landlord, for the purpose of drawing customers to his hostelry, as well as to have an opportunity of seeing the badger drawn; while bull baiting, except on great state occasions, was always a public affair.

The badger, in former times called the "Grey," is a small animal, which at no remote period was, comparatively speaking, plentiful in Cumberland and Westmorland, and in various parts of the north of England. It abounded, too, in Scotland, and its cured skin was used in making the Highlander's hanging pouch. It measured about three feet from the snout to the end of the tail, and weighed from seventeen to thirty pounds. Few animals are better able to defend themselves, and fewer still of their own weight and size dare attack them, in their native haunts. When in good case, they are remarkably strong, fight with great resolution if brought to bay, can bite extremely hard, and inflict very severe wounds. It is strange that it should have been so persistently and ruthlessly hunted and

destroyed, so as to lead to the almost entire extermination of the herd in this country.

In *Reminiscences of West Cumberland*, (printed for private circulation, in 1882,) William Dickinson gives the following account of the capture of some of these animals:—"On March 29, 1867, a badger was captured in a wood adjoining the river Derwent, by Mr. Stirling's gamekeeper. It was a full grown animal, in prime condition, and was secured without sustaining any injury. A few years before that a badger was caught near St. Bees. It was supposed to have escaped from captivity. Within my recollection, a badger was taken by a shepherd and his dogs, on Birker moor, and believed to be a wild one; and none had been known for many miles around by any one living. They are not now known to breed in Cumberland; but the late Mr. John Peel of Eskat, told me the brock or badger had a strong hold in Eskat woods, and that he once came so suddenly on a brock asleep, as it basked in the sun, that he struck it with his bill hook, and wounded it in the hind quarter. Its hole was so near that it crawled in and was lost. The place is still called the Brock-holes."

An interesting experiment has been tried on the Naworth Castle estate, the Border residence of Mr. George Howard, a dozen miles or so from Carlisle. About the year 1877 or 1878, four healthy and well developed badgers were let off, some two miles eastward from the castle, near the side of the river

Irthing, which flows through a wide sweep of charmingly diversified scenery. The place occupied by them is a piece of rough, woodland, "banky" ground, quiet and secluded, the soil being of a dry sandy nature. The badgers, in the first instance, were lodged in an old fox earth "bield," part of which they have held in undisturbed possession ever since. They appeared to fall in naturally with their new quarters, and soon took to digging and making the hole, and its various ramifications, much larger and more capacious.

Curiously enough, after the lapse of some years, the foxes returned to their old retreat, and for two successive seasons there has been a breed of young cubs reared in the same burrow with the badgers. Each species of animal has taken up a separate part or side-branch of the hole for its own particular use and abode; and, so far as appearance goes, the two families have lived together happy and contented for the time being.

A similar illustration of foxes fraternising with badgers is amply borne out in a valuable communi cation to *The Times*, of October 24th, 1877, by Mr. Alfred Ellis of Loughborough, who, after some difficulty, introduced a breed of badgers, in semi-wild state, to a covert within fifty yards of his own residence. Mr. Ellis says, "The fox and the badger are not unfriendly, and last spring a litter of cubs was brought forth very near the badgers; but their mother removed them after they had

grown familiar, as she probably thought they were showing themselves more than was prudent."

The neighbouring dogs are not known to have molested the Naworth badgers in any way, and it is now supposed the estate can number about a dozen in numerical strength. The nocturnal habits, natural to badgers, make it very difficult to study their actions and mode of life, with any amount of close observancy, as they rarely leave their holes till near nightfall, and are back again generally by daybreak.

There is not much which properly comes under the game laws near the badgers' place of rendezvous, but Mr. Brown, the head keeper, is under the impression that they are destructive to some kinds of game; in fact, he says, they take anything they can lay hold of in the shape of eggs or young birds. They dig a good deal for fern roots, and feed upon them, turning up the ground in the same way that a pig does. It would appear also that they are very fond of moles. Any of these animals left dead by the keepers or foresters, in the vicinity of their haunts, invariably disappear quickly and are no more seen.

Shy, reserved, and alert as the badgers are, they may be come upon sometimes, by chance or accident, on the banks of the Irthing; and when seen in the dusky twilight of a summer evening, "scufterin'" along through the long grass or "bracken" beds, they might be easily mistaken for a litter of young pigs.

In addition to the food incidentally mentioned, the badger lives upon frogs, insects, wasps' nests, fruit, grass, and a great variety of other things. Its habits are perfectly harmless in a wild state; and yet few animals have suffered so much cruel torture, in consequence of vulgar prejudice. The hams, as food, were esteemed superior in delicacy of flavour to the domestic pig or wild hog. In this country, the hind quarters only were used for food; while in some parts of Europe and in China, the whole carcass was held in high esteem, and considered to be very nutritious.

In hunting and capturing them, the usual plan was to dig a hole in the ground, across some path which they were known to frequent, covering the pit lightly over with sticks and leaves. Another mode of catching them was by means of a sack being carefully fitted to the entrance of their burrows. When supposed to be out feeding, two or three dogs were set to hunt the adjoining grounds, and the badger was thus driven homewards, and safely secured in the sack.

The mode of baiting was generally pursued as follows. Sometimes, according to choice, the animal was put into a barrel; while at other times, a trench was dug in the ground, fourteen inches deep and of the same width, and covered over with a board. But the plan most frequently adopted was to have a square drain-like box constructed, in the form of a capital letter L. The longer part

measured something like six feet in length, and the shorter part four feet. The box was throughout thirteen or fourteen inches square, with only one entrance way. When a baiting display took place, the badger was placed inside the box at the far end of the shorter compartment. It will be apparent, from being so placed, that it had some advantage over any dog attacking in front. The dog had to proceed up the longer leg of the box, and then turning sharp round, found the object of its search cautiously crouching, and on the watch for any advancing foe.

A strong fresh badger was never unprepared for fight, and, by being thus on the alert, had the opportunity of inflicting a fearful bite at the outset; so severe, indeed, that any currish inclined dog at once made the best of his way out, howling with pain, and thoroughly discomfited. And no coaxing, no inducement in the world, could make the craven-hearted brute attempt a second attack.

On the contrary, one of the right sort rushed immediately into close quarters, seized the badger with as little delay as might be, and endeavoured to drag it forth into open daylight. It required a dog of rare pluck and courage, however, to accomplish this feat—one, in fact, insensible to punishment; and few could be found willing to face and endure hard biting, and force the badger from its lair. Pure bred bull dogs will naturally go in and face anything, but it is in very few instances that

they make any attempt to draw. Long experience showed that the best and truest that could be produced, were a cross between a well bred bull dog and a terrier, commonly known as bull terriers. Sufficiently powerful and courageous dogs were, also, to some extent, to be found amongst rough wiry haired terriers—the Charlieshope Pepper and Mustard breed of Dandie Dinmonts—which "fear naething that ever cam wi' a hairy skin on't;" and the handsome, smooth, glossy-coated black and tan dog, "fell chield at the varmin," which would buckle either "tods or brocks." Bedlington terriers, —a distinct breed of Northumbrian origin, long known and esteemed in Cumberland and other northern counties—have frequently proved themselves admirable adepts at drawing the badger. These dogs, properly speaking, are more "fluffy" coated than wiry—have greater length of leg than the Dandie Dinmonts—are full of spirit and stamina —remarkably active and alert—and very fierce and resolute when called into action.

The badger is not often much hurt in the drawing, the thickness of their skin being sufficient to prevent them from taking any great harm. The looseness of the skin is such that they can turn easily, and, moreover, they are so quick in moving about, that the dogs are often desperately wounded in the first assault, and compelled to give up the contest.

To give an idea of the extreme sensitiveness for cleanliness which characterize the habits of the

badger, let the following example be taken. On being drawn from its barrel by the dog, it not unfrequently happens in the scuffle which ensues, that the animal is rolled over and over, among the mire of the road, or the dirt of some neighbouring dunghill. Should the badger, however, be able to escape to its place of refuge in the barrel, even for a minute or two, the onlooker is surprised to find it turn out again as "snod" and clean, as if the dragging process through the dirt had never been undergone.

Several proverbial sayings are current, which have been drawn from the nature and habits of this animal. For instance, a man of much and long continued endurance, is said to be "as hard as a brock;" and any one, upon whom age is creeping, and whose hair has lost a good deal of its original brightness, is said to be "as grey as a badger." Relph of Sebergham, in detailing in his native patois, the woes of a young and lusty love-sick swain, gives an illustration of one of the modes of hunting the animal:—

> Nae mair i' th' neets thro' woods he leads,
> To treace the wand'rin' *brock*;
> But sits i' th' nuik, an' nowt else heeds,
> But Jenny an' her rock.

In addition to the haunts of the badger incidentally mentioned, Brock-stones, in Kentmere; Brock-holes, at the foot of Tebay Fells; Graythwaite woods, in Furness Fells; Greystoke forest, near

Penrith; Brockley-moor, in Inglewood forest; Brock-hills, near Hesket Newmarket; and Brockle-bank, on the east side of Derwentwater;—these and many other like coverts in the Lake Country, (as their names indicate,) were all strongholds and places of much resort for these animals, in the olden time.

Within the memory of living man, badgers have burrowed in the sand hills on Brocklebank, where it was not uncustomary for the tag-rag and bob-tail fraternity of Keswick, to hunt and capture them for the purpose of baiting.

About the year 1823, Tom Wilson, a shoemaker —reared at The Woodman inn, Keswick—remembers one being caught in a sack at the foot of Brockle-beck, when a novel but extremely foolish experiment was tried in the way of hunting it. It was let off in the midst of a gang of rough men, half-grown lads, and dogs, in deep water, near Lord's Island on Derwent Lake, and the chances are that the poor animal perished by drowning. At all events, it soon disappeared under the surface, and was never seen again by man or dog.

A husbandman, named Jonathan Gill, captured another on Great How, a steep wooded mountain which rises on the east side of Thirlmere lake. These are the two last badgers in the Keswick locality, of which we have any tidings. It is more than probable that the Brocklebank herd became dispersed or extinct about this period.

ADDENDA

MIDNIGHT CHASE OF A BULL BY PROFESSOR WILSON.

THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

REPRESENT to yourself the earliest dawn of a fine summer's morning, time about half-past two o'clock. A young man, anxious for an introduction to Mr. Wilson, and as yet pretty nearly a stranger to the country, has taken up his abode in Grasmere, and has strolled out at this early hour to that rocky and moorish common (called the White Moss) which overhangs the Vale of Rydal, dividing it from Grasmere. Looking southwards in the direction of Rydal, suddenly he becomes aware of a huge beast advancing at a long trot, with the heavy and thundering tread of a hippopotamus, along the public road. The creature is soon arrived within half a mile of his station; and by the grey light of morning is at length made out to be a bull, apparently flying from some unseen enemy in his rear. As yet, however, all is mystery; but suddenly three horsemen double a turn in the road, and come flying into sight with the speed of a hurricane,

manifestly in pursuit of the fugitive bull. The bull labours to navigate his huge bulk to the moor, which he reaches, and then pauses panting and blowing out clouds of smoke from his nostrils, to look back from his station amongst rocks and slippery crags upon his hunters. If he had conceited that the rockiness of the ground had secured his repose, the foolish bull is soon undeceived; the horsemen, scarcely relaxing their speed, charge up the hill, and speedily gaining the rear of the bull, drive him at a gallop over the worst part of that impracticable ground down to the level ground below. At this point of time the stranger perceives by the increasing light of the morning that the hunters are armed with immense spears fourteen feet long. With these the bull is soon dislodged, and scouring down to the plain below, he and the hunters at his tail take to the common at the head of the lake, and all, in the madness of the chase, are soon half engulphed in the swamp of the morass. After plunging together for about ten or fifteen minutes all suddenly regain the *terra firma*, and the bull again makes for the rocks. Up to this moment, there had been the silence of ghosts; and the stranger had doubted whether the spectacle were not a pageant of aërial spectres—ghostly huntsmen, ghostly lances, and a ghostly bull. But just at this crisis, a voice (it was the voice of Mr. Wilson) shouted aloud, "Turn the villain! turn that villain! or he will take to Cumberland." The young

stranger did the service required; the villain was turned, and fled southwards; the hunters, lance in rest, rushed after him; all bowed their thanks as they fled past; the fleet cavalcade again took the high road; they doubled the cape which shut them out of sight; and in a moment all had disappeared, and left the quiet valley to its original silence, whilst the young stranger, and two grave Westmorland "statesmen," (who by this time had come into sight upon some accident or other) stood wondering in silence, and saying to themselves, perhaps,

> "The earth hath bubbles as the water hath;
> And these are of them."

But they were no bubbles; the bull was a substantial bull, and took no harm at all from being turned out occasionally at midnight for a chase of fifteen or eighteen miles. The bull, no doubt, used to wonder at this nightly visitation; and the owner of the bull must sometimes have pondered a little on the draggled state in which the swamps would now and then leave his beast; but no other harm came of it.

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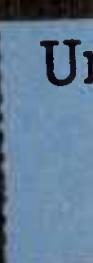
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